

jubilat

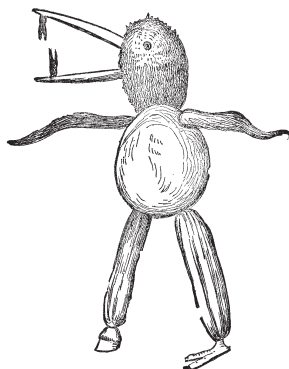


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NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE ARTS

CONTENTS

- 6 *Four Poems*
MARY JO BANG
- 10 *Two Poems*
MELISSA BARRETT
- 12 *Five Poems*
ERIC BAUS
- 17 *Nostos*
CHASE BERGGRUN
- 21 *Two Poems*
CAROLINE CREW
- 24 *Fragment*
CYNTHIA CRUZ
- 26 *Mother Confirms My Original Sin*
CHEKWUBE DANLADI
- 27 *Love Poem by the Light of the Refrigerator*
ALISHA DIETZMAN
- 28 *Three Poems*
ALINA GREGORIAN
- 31 *Ode*
MICHAEL GRINTHAL
- 33 *Finca Vigía*
JESSICA GUZMAN
- 34 *Two Poems*
RUHI JIWANI
- 36 *Four Poems*
JULIA JOHNSON
- 40 *Two Poems*
DYLAN KRIEGER

- 46 *Home*
YOUNA KWAK
- 48 *On Jaws*
SETH LANDMAN
- 54 *Three Poems*
MARCEL LEGROS
- 57 *An Existential Threat*
DAVID LEHMAN
- 59 *Excerpts from Wolf Track: a reading of John Ashbery's Flow Chart*
LESLIE LEWIS
- 71 *When I Feel a Whoop Comin' On*
STEVEN LEYVA
- 74 *Arroyo*
ANANDA LIMA
- 76 *Kamikaze*
RIVER LORD
- 80 *Hot Fruit*
ERINROSE MAGER
- 82 *The Tailor*
NICK MAIONE
- 84 *Two Poems*
DAVID MILLS
- 88 *The Lion, the Witch & My Brother Timiko*
BENJAMÍN NAKA-HASEBE KINGSLEY
- 89 *Blood Diary (Girl Across the Street): Moth on Fire*
RAINIE OET
- 90 *At the Window*
CAITLIN ROACH

- 93 *Saludé Mija*
DOMINIQUE SALAS
- 95 *Two Poems*
P. L. SANCHEZ
- 98 *Conor Oberst*
SEAN SHEARER
- 100 *Transit*
ALEŠ ŠTEGER (TRANSLATED BY BRIAN HENRY)
- 110 *jubilat Interview*
BIANCA STONE
- 124 *jubilat Interview*
JULIAN TALAMANTEZ BROLASKI
- 135 *Five Poems*
LAURA THEOBALD
- 140 *Whatever I Have Done That Was Good,
I Have Done at the Bidding of My Voices*
JACK UNDERWOOD
- 141 *Two Poems*
EMMA WINSOR WOOD
- 144 *A Cloak You Cannot Take Off.*
S. YARBERRY
- 145 *Harborfront House*
JESSICA YUAN
- 146 **Appearances of Eternal Presence**
ALINA GREGORIAN

COVER ART: *Sarah Meadows*

FAR FROM HERE IN AN ASTROPHYSICAL WORMHOLE

Mary Jo Bang

Far from here in an astrophysical wormhole that spanned an infinite distance, the triple goddess had three of everything: faces, throats, voices, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera—all irrefutable evidence that tripling & trinity existed long ago before the triad of furies was unleashed on Prometheus once he'd been made very "fast by tying (with fetters and chains)." Along the way, ashen light fell over forests outside the gaping mouths of caves. Power got concentrated in the hands of a conquering few who swept aside freedom and invented a girlish avatar for every anxious damning force that falls like water on us. A cat now played with a snake in lieu of a mouse. The rabbit in the moon stood like a raven on a writing desk while Adam the priest looked down at a birdbath at the middle of the orchard. He saw only his own face in the water so insisted the rabbit was a man. Cain was thinking. Abel was absent. Lilith was threatening to leave. The moon was on her side. Full circle means you come back to the beginning again—a rattlesnake or stand-in Queen is offering the pretty girl a poison apple. You overhear an argument that ends with JUST STOP IT. You might think that has little-to-no importance but in this story that would be far from the truth.

THE THERAPIST WEARS PRETTY DRESSES

The therapist wears pretty dresses and I sometimes so want to touch them. It makes my throat close to think of that fabric under my fingers. One day, a Wednesday, I said, May I? She nodded as if she too knew that that small act of intimacy would bond us together for life. And it has. She lives now inside a synapse where I'll never get rid of her. One more metal link in the collar that's unclasped each evening in dream-land where I pretend I'm a well-behaved blue-burlap dog walking along beside Anna Freud. *Arf. Arf, arf.* The oncoming cars slow on the curve as we pass. Are they looking at us? It's not possible to know. This is the way of the world. Us and them, me and her, my cells devolving daily into a mash-up of past and present, with and without. The instability is dizzying. Ditto the revving autos and scent of petrol. I form-fit myself to the air that comes forward the way confession booth breath conforms to the shape of a closet. Similarly, my face fades into the feather pillow when I lie down at night. This is her, I say. This is me. This is the want I didn't want when I had it but now it is all that I have. A facsimile. A flowering pear's off tree leaves. The taste of metal being beaten bounces back off the glassy surface of a pond-size Lake July.

EYES OPEN, YOU PROCESS THE DATA

Eyes open, you process the data and in time become aware of how it works: the corruption that causes the synaptic activity to become a coat also acts like the camera that captures the cellblock of an instant, mug shot of an afternoon botanical garden where the never-ending echo of a Deco arcade runs around the block while the ornamental myth of floral love repeats ad infinitum around the rim of a carpet-bedding clock face. Night is a blanket over barking dogs. On her bed, the new girl had a paperback with two girls on the cover. I picked it up and asked, *Why? Why not*, the Cassandra answered. Dear god that doesn't exist, we are identical—or soon will be: I evoke you, I go, you are gone. A few tears are shed on the way there and back: the down-slope latches onto the landscape and flies by. I stood and watched the mountain become the snow it was meant to be. Even so, the Spain-trip snapshots came back blurred: a tapered haircut, a red chair with satin-backed pink slippers, tiny painted lips on a celluloid goldfish, the frayed elastic ribbon bordering the Freudian curtain above an infantile crib. Opening the envelope, an idea arranged itself in the cerebellar parenchyma. To rent or to rip is to tear off in tiers.

THE ACTUAL OCCURRENCES

The actual occurrences—death and New York, physical principles, everything included in the nature of the inevitable now wedded to ‘since when’—were tasked with carving up the uncanny concreteness of the cold-to-the-touch material world. The result was a curated notion of Heaven *cum* Hell set in a tangible present, the fogged open-window/winter-world view. The matter-of-factness had a quasi-scientific presence, the sense of a photographer documenting quasar-like electrical impulses assaulting a hilltop well beyond venture: the tower, reticent and hermetic, the treasured possession that began as a gift from a sensitive friend who had engaged in time-space-travel, then came back, barged in, and began carrying on about ‘logical consequences.’ She said, “One way to discuss Time is to ask, ‘What covers over the instant with makeup?’” Or, remixed, ‘Who’s dabbing eyeliner on the stand-in understudy?’ “I said the timeline would have to account for the shoeless child becoming obsolete and the adult taking the wheel—essentially twins with differences so subtle even they’d get confused: which one watched the snowman melt into tears while the other kept busy crying about somebody dying too soon?

MORE MATTER WITH LESS ART

Melissa Barrett

A meadow in lime, mirror-flat.
A meadery in Lima churning vats.
Mirror-cold advances from every
man in *Hamlet*. More of them
with fewer lines is what the Queen
demanded. It's true that Hamlet
was treated pretty badly, like when
his mom called him a poor wretch
just for walking by and reading.
You've got to be cruel to be kind though,
that's the whole thing. Why not indict
a sitting king? Rosencrantz and Guildenstern
were cast as hyenas in *The Lion King*.
My dog's name is Ratio, short for
Horatio. I plan my vacations by airport code.
Sleet in Prague and plagued by sleep.
Unplugged lamps loom over unplowed streets.
I make micro-fleece sheets for a living;
my company's name is Microsoft.
New Haven to Helsinki: HVN to HEL.
Fukuoka, Japan, to Omaha, Nebraska: FUK OFF.

WARLIER

A typo, I meant earlier, but apt for a country
that coins terms to match
the goals of its military, a highly weaponized
anything, a place of discounted day-old
baked goods, a stream of As in June
exchanged for movie rentals
or bowling shoes and a basket of jumbo maxi
pads on the counter in the bathroom, just help
yourself. These are the things we aim to protect.
A country with a language like a stop
watch going in a drawer. And my own words
corroborated by that signal. The sky a twist
of rope, fat and wet, weighing down Bowman
Field, past shadows of single-passenger planes
that sting the ground in a fuzz of violet.
My professor, a ring of silver hair circling
his head, told me he wasn't ready to show
his grandchildren monuments that glorified war.
We walked through the National Mall
past trashcans sculpted high with plastic.
A country that organizes its trash
but it's still trash. And in the very best case
it will become trash once again. It's like
how Merwin ended his poem "When the War
is Over"—he said, "We will all enlist again."

RENOUNCED POLLEN RETURNED TO THE DATURA PLAINS

Eric Baus

The miasma was asleep, barbed data describing its brain to the weather
in a numb wildflower. We sang Have a Good Storm until egret seedlings
relearned their wiring from the watts of a startled grave. I had hurts.
Had lost soil. But these grasses. Those geese.

THE ERA OF REDACTED FOXES

The sky fled. It was always raining in the next room. The ceiling slept beneath nervous grasses.

LOST SOIL

Geese under a tree. Then mountains then clouds then sky. And the eye,
a very clear eye. Do you see a beak?

DUET FOR THE END OF SPACE

The moss was acting exactly like the sky. The day the miasma divided,
The mirages all dried.

MINNOW PULSES

The ocean in a jellyfish. The sky in a cloud. The storm in a worm. The flies in a squirrel's fur. The fences in a horse. The science in an axe. The apricot in an alphabet. The mind in a minnow. The fire in an orchard. The hours in a bee. The bandage in a branch. The hand in a harpoon. The dying sea in a signature. The tiny wars in a sleeping fox. The vowels in a wildcat. The despair in New England. The despair in Indiana in a road in a dying deer. The endocrine system in an anxious ghost.

NOSTOS

Chase Berggrun

Life and all
of its arousing hibiscusness
is getting in the way

bludgeon barrel brickshape redhand bought with bone

A word that is only one
letter
a fizzling failure
to describe the shape of me which is
a chalk outline waiting
wanting for flash flood

When the reverie wears
off I am nevertheless I am awake in this bed
still blood again
narrowing my chin without a meal
in a dress
on a train wearing
a dress obviously obviously
asking for a stare

Thinking of your colour in a calm new city

Cloudpink is the color of the chill underskirt when I hear your heels

NOSTOS

I am generous with you at least I am trying now that I am able
with

my skin I want nothing
but gifts and to turn
the lamps off

and you are
a silk person who wants things also

I am a tall grown bitch swinging side-to-side among the reeds
displeased & pleased

Spitting lazily imperfect of tongue but tonguing perfectly

I need to carry your mouth with me everywhere I go

If not then gnostic
big badly bred balloon
breeze-bursting

Promise me
not nothing but little or else
I will inflate

NOSTOS

Hello

triple faced thirst

!

Good morning and

good moment

I leave the house to meet you

all dressed up

Good morning

A pleasure to meet

you to meet anyone

where they are

A pleasure

not to need to flee

I greet you in breathing

slow bow stroke across the string

I think about drinking

and I think about drinking

I greet you !

No longer like a pronoun

can I replace your name no longer

must I live

in vague gesticulation

Hello

Oh

glorious God and me

moi !

unpenetrated
liquid

leaking glass

BARNSTORMER

Caroline Crew

my hair fell / unguarded / it takes
the freight train / north / not
an oath / I don't wear those /
lightly / approach the border / bold /
& cross / that simple / that sigh
to breathe one line / & the next /
airport security / refuses this
tender difference / I have only
flown / one ocean / my repeat
ritual / rite of commercial
passage / my pat down comes
on schedule / ma'am what
is your reason for travel /
business / or / pleasure /
what do you call / the museum
of family / I pay admission /
with a speculator's tongue /
the fluorescent slow dance /
of the barn burnt down/ and re-
built / same spot / not a pit
of ghosts / I come from a long line
of spurious reasoning / do you
want anything more / than dust
to connect you / accumulation
of data / I am born / I was
born / I grow / into the space /
of my permission / I bleed /

I bled / bent down to profess /
an excellence / of shame /
I do not burn down / yet /
the barn / I crept to / crept
back / once the boys / who lit
the match were found / they re-
built / this time without a balanced
roof / single slope to the sky /
not a return / a flight / fending
thrill / after thrill / out of fire /
for which my gratitude / goes
unhassled / from one corner /
to the next / a burning out /
brought forth / my burgeon /
brought home

I AM THE FAT OF THE LAND

creamy thighs, the dry continental breakfast
of airport fiction, a constant blurred cliché
take another climate into consideration
other than damp England
and my body's bigger synecdoche silences
You're disappointed the desert bloomed.
No, I'm disappointed I saw the desert
on something other than an average hair day.
what am I made of here
what man tells me how to smile
with the wide curve of landscape in his gesture
You know you look the same no matter the humidity.
What do you know about tendrils.
I know I don't blame flora for my fauna
urge excuses.

FRAGMENT

Cynthia Cruz

Black coffee and bottled water
for days.

Vials of medicine,
clandestine, and expired

travel guides.
A cache of letters, unreadable.

Polaroids and photographs.
Bachmann or Franza, in the desert

or, three summers ago
on a blue bus from Cairo.

My body is exposed,
glittering in its invisible skeins

of dread and terror.
And the face.

The terrible intimacy
of the mouth.

What I say
may be used against me.

Not unlike the body.
How it is always

exposed. What happened
in that house

can not be written down.
If I have a secret

I am not telling
then I am a tomb.

Tremendous,
and without words,

the song
I am never not singing.

MOTHER CONFIRMS MY ORIGIN SIN

Chekwube Danladi

The burden of an honest name. Says its curse transfused confusion.
So no surprise when she caught me with my breasts bound,
the two of us: silent and together, in the basement by the dryer.
It was 4pm and I was nearly out of 25.

So no surprise she caught on to me, my breasts bound
as she came home early that day from her work.
It was 4pm and I was 25, nearly out of it.
My mother heard, before, folks ask me *is you a bitch or a nigga?*

That day, coming home early to her work.
What's happening? Her voice low. *Why this, again?*
Before, she'd heard folks ask of me *is that a bitch, nigga?*
She was equally terrified of the waiting answer.

What happened? Her voice low. *Why try this again?*
Something unearthed to light up the room.
We waited equally terrified for an answer.
Eventually I accuse: *the blame is yours, if anyone's. Remember?*

Something unearthed to light up the room.
Her hmph clamored for a new season, my rot.
Remember, I was accused, eventually: *the blame is yours, if anyone's.*
The burden of an honest name. Says its curse transfused confusion.

LOVE POEM BY THE LIGHT OF THE REFRIGERATOR

Alisha Dietzman

If you open the door, the light
blue light is watery as girls in those
limp posters, overhead. I am listening
to your memory and it sounds like
UNLIMITED ACCESS. I call your name,
tenderly. We live in a world
with few headboards left.
Their little decency
offends me, anyway/anyway
I call your name, tenderly.
I spit in the sink. The near miss
of this always makes my hands cold,

loose, and then I feel *few*—that's it,
that's what I wanted to say: few.

SALTED CUCUMBER WITH RADISHES

Alina Gregorian

NOTE:

The following poems feature Persian words I learned growing up. Until recently, I thought they were Armenian, my first language. My parents are from Iran, so these words are a part of their vocabulary.

There is a metaphor in that tree, and suddenly everything is tree. Like *talebi* in the middle of the ocean. Or a space station demanding to be seen. When we say *kheyar*, what we're really thinking about is the whirlwind at the door. The condition of reality that we *gaghvei* to understand. I speak to you in Armenian. It's the only way I know how to be real. The squiggly lines are not squished, but they are round. They are so sphere.

CHAIRS ON ASTROTURF LANDSCAPE

This green light behind my computer screen shines when everyone is asleep. The blue notebook on the desk. The camera in the corridor. These are the ways you feel alive. These are the ways *foozool* is real. Like cool mint on a summer's day. Like triangle on a winter's night. Look at these piles of books on the vintage *malafe*. Look how they *zang* and *chasp*. I want to compose songs under the fluorescent sky. Dance many sonatas. We learned a new language by dreaming of yellow rooftops. Trying to conjure a place where things matter, but only because they do.

THE KEYBOARD IS GREEN LIKE A TANGERINE

There's a square in the sky, and it's larger than it was yesterday. Like a basket of happiness disguised as golden turnips. Like *mage* on a foggy day. When you dance, do you imagine yourself as a pear? Dancing through *hatta* with a backpack full of books? Or do you feel like a mountain goat. Finding peace through the storm. When I think of geometry, I think of you. The shape of your existence is cute. You are a *chelo kebab* that is so many things. When I think of *veleshkone*, I think of lavender and treetops. Take me to the moon with you. There is so much moon to see there.

ODE

Michael Grinthal

to my parts. They aren't mine
I'm one of them
And my empty belly
Is a whole the devil will never have
To fill. I'm six
Or seven wolves in a winter
Tree
I am not cured!
I'm rat
On a hunt to be lost in waking snow
Specifically
According to his diary it's
A walnut tree
Out his window
He's six
Or seven and suspects his thoughts
Of having bodies intently
Watching him be
In the dark among
Other things
This is true enough
Of all these things I'm
Not to eat, sing
Unfinished rat
Our throat is a tree perfo
rated with wolves
Or decomposing into wolves'

(Snow be our
Wings) interruptive
Stumping dance among
Other things for a poem and
Animals are only the continuation
Of holes by others' means
Choral the root
Of the mouth is the jaw
Of the ass and the root of
The mouth is the jaw of the
Ass and the hole
Where the root was the
Root is
The root and it hurts
A new way each time you say it

FINCA VIGÍA

*HEMINGWAY'S HAVANA HOME

Jessica Guzman

Now, the parakeet's red
shoulders blaze between paced
poincianas, roots abiding
approach shrug by shrug, rumble
strips for rickshaws,
as street dogs cross
their legs, slack against Spanish
moss, the lizard's tail, needles
and wings anticipating
the mosquitoes' launch, brush
bent under cement
blocks, & windows latched
where shrubs stagger in relief
of stucco, ivory walls a thumb
jutting from palm
fronds, risen, like dirt
shoveled from the plot
downhill where a girl buries
a cigar box, a spider
threading the lock.

PLAYING CATCH

Ruhi Jiwani

Before I started running in my 20s,
I was the slowest runner in my class,
my slender limbs bending at different angles
from everyone else's.

I balanced books on my head with ease,
threaded needles with dexterity
and painted, in love with the feel of the brush
washing across the page.

But I didn't have that self-propelling urge
to run from outstretched hands
like octopus limbs extending in water—
a slow motion grab like a break dance wave
traveling from fingertip to fingertip.

It was terrible when someone reached for me.
I squirmed and ran away sobbing,
like the day my middle-aged neighbor
wrapped his arm around my adolescent body
and tried to kiss me in his garage.

PARIAH

There's a Renoir hung in my bedroom
pasted to a piece of cardboard.
There are five women in it and eight men.
The women have red lips.
One is making a kissy face at a cat.
There are four bottles of wine on the table.
Everyone wears a hat except one man.
One woman leans on a parapet.
There are red flowers in another woman's hat
and a cigarette in one man's hand.
One woman has lifted a glass to her mouth.
The English word "pariah"
is derived from the Hindi word "paraya,"
which means someone who is not yours—
someone who doesn't belong.
In the Renoir, everyone belongs
but I am outside the painting, watching.

MOUSE

Julia Johnson

Smaller Lip
Fur Door
Frame Clever
Purse Missing
Eye Mattress
Fence Shovel
White Tail
Him Gaze
Loosen Fragment
Stole Stone
Weapon Right
Likeness Wife
Per Lost
Weight Limp

THINGS I SHOULD TELL MY THERAPIST

How I wander the arboretum.

How I wore another woman's coat home.

How I've forgotten where I've parked in the garage three times this week.

How the rain on the grass perfectly dampened each blade of grass.

How everything white is such a vibrant white.

How the skin of the elephant at the zoo was exactly how I expected it to feel.

How the ocean closest to me must touch your ocean someday, somewhere.

How you just might be asleep in your ship's cabin.

How I know your three middle names.

How my watch can tell the difference between us.

How the side of your face is never in shadow.

How we held the shooting star for a while just under our eyelids.

How we knew.

How this stretch of land is ours.

How the small of my back feels like a butter knife passing through it.

PROCESSIONARY MOTHS

We must not go near the oak's
processionary moth nests
we could go into anaphylactic shock
our airways could close up
if we come into contact with
the long white hairs of the caterpillar
I am tempted to get on
a plane tomorrow just to try
to find a cluster of them
their silky backs curled
inside their nest on a trunk of an oak
in a London park I would like to see
them process in their
nose-to-tail way even if I risk inhaling
one of their 62,000 toxic hairs

THE MAN WHO COUNTS WHALES

for a living also counts seals
he wears a gold earring of a whale fin
I think of all of the occupations
that involve counting and I can barely
keep count of the ones that I've thought
of so far a greeter at the discount store
who's told to hold a clicker to count the number
of customers entering the store
the young Asian guy at the fruit stand in Brooklyn
he's always counting fruit for you
the gray-haired bank teller counting the bills you've
handed her from last night's tips
the teenage boy at the go-cart place counting
the go-carts as they come around the track
the gardener counting bulbs as she places them in the mulch
as if she's planting something
she will never see again
the grocery store cashier is always counting tuna cans
and yogurts and granola bars
and loose grapes falling from a sack
I step outside and try to count the cardinals
on the telephone line and in the trees
but they fly away each time I get to three
you're a timekeeper for a living
yourself counting radioactive isotopes
you are twitching a bit in your sleep
your fingers careful tapping counting
something but I know not what

HOME

Youna Kwak

Where am I now if not at home.
Where am I now if not at home.

Five bucks a day let's call it home.
Let's call it home, let's call it a day.

No one wanted us, why did we come?
If no one called us, why did we come?

Breaking and entering, five bucks a day.
Glass knocker white door chain link let's call it

home. Let's call it a day, let's break down the door
I broke down the door, called it

grove of orange, fairy dust, the jacaranda's
beaded rush of purple spilling forth when

home is for belonging, when
belonging never occurred—

I can't wait, I can't wait
to go home.

Waiting a word that never occurred
I can't wait what you say

precisely and only when you are waiting,

I don't want to what you say
precisely exactly when what you want

goes further, higher, longer, deeper, beyond
saying, but come, now shut the door, let us all go home.

Leave it all behind you let the backward glance
turn them all to salt.

Did God kick us out?
When he came and said: go home,

and we ought now,
go home, let's go home.

Five bucks, leave it untouched,
let them teach themselves

to walk, to pray, to build. We're going,
homesick, for night, our night,

its particular cast, our nights, our stars,
those that recognize

our names, our faces, point their lights,
bright lights in the direction we are facing. Their homing

devices. Scale the wall, let's go home. Leave them
to their reckoning. Leave

your kitchen, your fruit fields, your labs, your cabs,
leave the dishes, the toilets, the bridges,

the miracles, the papers, the gardens, the magnificent gardens,
which feed all the fists stuffed into harmless houses.

Leave the clothes unwashed, and the papers ungraded.
Empty your pockets, leave it all on the table.

Scale the wall, let's go home, we were
never invited. Don't follow their lights, we won't follow

ill stars. God arrived but he too
was uninvited.

Yes, it's time to go home. We're not wanted,
here. God arrived, said: you ought best

to go. Best wish, intentions, breathstar,
desire, let's not waste, our precious

store of desire. One life, and ever after. Come, let's go home
and leave them to it. We never asked to come

and when we asked,
we were mistaken. We admit our mistake.

Let us return. Our words can but burn
crisp holes in their tongues, let us go

to the place of our belonging. Pry open the door

that once slammed shut behind you. When your made your way
to the land of non-belonging. Home a word
that never occurred
and capsizing then through another door
and then another
and then may I sleep
and wake up successful, and then
may I sleep, find a dollar on my table,
one life, only, awaits us
and the second life that was stolen.
Receive it. It's time to go home. There's nothing
here to see. Syria Libya Venezuela Iran
North Korea Yemen Somalia Chad. Bottom line made impossible.
What we dreamed is no longer possible. Gather up
your heart, your hands, this is not our home. I have only one life
I will not waste it. Where eyes' peering
from the brush is intent to harm. Where eyes peering from the brush
bear no specific love. No specific love
and no way to be seen and the desire to be seen
a catastrophe in the making. Feet on the ground. The waving of palms,
fret, willow, jacaranda. There was

no invitation, let me go where I belong. Perhaps I might
sleep and wake up successful. The winds too

they must go, let the Santa Ana blow. We claim and we
take them. I address now my brother

who does not feel addressed. Here no one sees
your suffering, not even your kin. Santa Ana winds blow.

Then they too must go. Empty the restaurants, the fields,
their fierce flowering. Leave them to the clack-clack

noisome fret of their not-willing. When the words
bar our entrance. They can put our likeness

in a wax museum. Where else can we go? Surface of water,
ocean unbending, passing flowering

fields, grassy fields, past the trucks, empty
trucks, don't drive them, abandon

the ill-formed destiny of your wheel. Cut your own hair,
roll your word on your tongue, it's your mother

your tongue, let's go, let's get out,
let the glass knocker still, let's not enter that house,

should not have entered that house, where's the door? Past the
mirror? Through the hall of self-loathing.

Where's the door, how do we go? And we thank you for the visit.
The orange groves, the stillness

of oaks. Thank you for the visit. Wasteland here
refers to where you cannot live. Houses all
alike where you never had a home. What belonging
can possibly mean to a stranger. Gravel
bed, mound of dirt. The aesthetics of the landscape
where we are not visible. Let us go
but not everyone can join us. I'll lift the yoke
of kindness and just go. Not return. Brush
your own hair, pour your own drink. Write
your own books and your own dim music. Make love
to yourself and tend your own
garden. Be your own monster,
be your own weakness, I tell you
we are going home. We've only one life,
we'll live it there. No second life
to waste or spare. Be your own enemy, your own
salvation. Be your own fear. Return to
safety. No second life to waste or spare.
No second life to waste or spare.
No second life to waste or spare.

ALL THE SPECIAL DIETS

Dylan Krieger

a mammal that can't drink milk
fetishizes its own kidnapping
like wouldn't a mysterious dis
appearance be just delicious?
amber alert for my inner pseudo
patriotic glutton, it's thanksgiving
and i don't even give a shit about
pigskins or the immaculate scalpings
from which we descend—the last time
i ate turkey i was 14 with big plans for
carving up my pale wrists in the dark
there wasn't an animal in my stomach
but you for 8 years after that—naturally
i get attached, but the doctor says next
to cut out all sugars and yeast, so i bake
you into a fruit pie i can never eat and
watch you grow miniature colonies of
rot around your latticed crust going
to tragic waste untasted and i'm sure
you hate me but please keep listening
for the dinner bell because you're all
it ever talks about i swear it edges on
obnoxious honestly, sitting here starving
mouth awater at a nationstate of larva

SPECTRUM SENSITIVE

you pick up a wanton signal in your nerve endings and morse code a cagey greeting. no telling who is calling. jekyll or hyde, a fuckboy gemini that keeps you crawling across his awful x axis for the mythologized prospect of y. i once made my mother cry by telling her my personal record—how many times i came at the hand of a man in a day. so maybe the pain is just the inverse of a broader spectrum of sensation—spread my legs and you can see the range. for every sunroof rager, a backseat hangover. for every butterfly, a battered wife. the danger of counting your blessings is drinking buddies will never outnumber the date-raping strangers you can stomach. you keep waiting for the moment you get full enough to vomit, but after a decade in the touch-me trenches, you suspect it's never coming. cut me open across the abdomen and watch them all fall out on the linoleum, untold reverse births half-digested at the fontanel. if my body is a temple, fix a bell to your sandal. jingle like hell

ON JAWS

Seth Landman



Detail from John Singleton Copley's *Watson and the Shark*
(courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art)

At the end of *Jaws*, the remnants of the shark (blown, finally, to bits by a shotgun blast to a tank of compressed air lodged in its mouth) float in a gorgeous, blood red cloud down through the part of the ocean where there still is light. As the shark's fin sails down through this cloud, you hear a strange groan on the soundtrack. It sounds like a desperate, broken, wailing, mechanical death. Steven Spielberg has said that he stole this sound effect from his previous feature, 1971's *Duel*, a

film in which a businessman is murderously pursued by a psychopathic, rogue truck driver along a stretch of two-lane highway in the California desert. It is the sound you hear when the huge oil tanker finally crashes explosively down the face of a cliff, much to the relief of, well, anyone watching the movie, I guess (*The Making of Stephen Spielberg's Jaws*).¹

Of course, this sound is not the sound dead shark pieces make as they glide through the water and settle on the bottom of the sea. That particular event: I don't think it *has* a sound. Even so, this part of the movie feels right. It feels like the sound something big and horrible makes as it leaves your experience; even better, it feels good when it's gone.

I love this little bit of storytelling, because it serves as a perfect reminder that experience has very little to do with truth in the sense of truth as adherence to the facts of reality. Much like the residents of Amity during the first act of *Jaws*, I'm not all that interested in reality, it turns out. I'm much more interested in what feels true. The shark can't just silently sink; it must be heard from one more time, and the sound it makes must be mournful, mysterious, and maybe a little unearthly.

Jaws is about the relationship between truth and fear, which means it is also about our capacity for revelation and our capacity for denial. In *Moby-Dick* (obviously a related text), Captain Ahab screams to all his rapt crew, but especially to Starbuck, his pious, skeptical first mate, "All visible objects, man, are but as pasteboard masks. But in each event—in the living act, the undoubted deed—there, some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask" (145). This is everywhere in *Jaws*. The whole first hour of the movie enacts a kind of public denial of the submerged

1 In the same documentary, Spielberg said, "In fact, it was a dinosaur growling from an old B dinosaur picture." I love this. The sound was meant to lend realism to a creature that went extinct many millions of years ago, was appropriated to mimic the sound of an oil tanker falling off a cliff, and was then finally appropriated again in the service of a dying shark.

terror just beneath the surface. “We’ve never had that kind of trouble in these waters,” says one of the town suits,² but we have already seen it.

Come to think of it, no we haven’t, not exactly. What we’ve seen is evidence of its presence in the world: blooms of blood in the water, screaming victims, shredded ocean floats, broken docks gliding serenely back to shore. The town depends on summer dollars; God, there is always something. The world is not reasonable, so the world will not be reasonable now. We will never see what is under the surface, through the veil, on the other side of the mask until it is too late, until we are already bleeding, until the sharks are already on their way.

But what about Ahab’s “unknown but still reasoning thing”? The infuriating world is always with us, its inner workings tantalizingly out of reach. When Moses said to the Lord, “Show me your glory, I pray” (*The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, Exod. 33:18), the Lord said to Moses, “You cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live. See, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen” (Exod. 33:20-23) In the original poster for *Jaws*, a gigantic shark ascends, a parabola of vicious teeth beneath the placid surface. A nude bather glides above, unaware of the horror just beneath her. “No one shall see me and live,” said the Lord. Why? Is that because of us, or is that because of the Lord? We can’t see the truth; we don’t want to see the truth; the truth shreds us; the truth is absolutely unavailable to us.

As such, we muddle through as best we can, driven on by what Melville referred to as “the innermost necessities of our being” (146). In *Jaws*, Mayor Vaughn denies the reality of the shark’s presence because the shark is bad for business, and in response Chief Brody looks the other way, cowed by power. Brody ultimately goes after the

2 Harry Meadows, played by Carl Gottlieb, whose book, *The Jaws Log*, is an indispensable, wonderful read for anyone who loves *Jaws*.

shark because he is ashamed at his own cowardice and its terrible consequences. Hooper goes after the shark because he loves the shark and wants to see it; when he finally does, fear freezes him. Quint goes after the shark because the shark is coming, because the shark is always coming, because the shark always comes.³ The shark is at the center of all of this, full of mysterious power, an engine churning an emotional maelstrom.

One part of the movie always makes me cry. Just after the shark has killed the young boy, Alex Kintner, when Brody, fearing the shark, yells at his son Michael to get out of the little boat he has tied to the pier behind the house. Mrs. Brody chastises her husband for making the boys fearful, but then she glances at the book Brody's been reading about sharks and sees a horrific picture of a shark attacking a boat. In a panic, she ends up yelling too: "Michael! Did you hear your father!" Moments like this—realization dawning on us that there are sinister forces out there, that our desire for the world to be safe does not make it so—stand out saliently over the course of a film or a life. Famously, the mechanical shark the effects team built never really worked, so Spielberg relied on the faces of his actors, bobbing barrels, blinking shark darts, the weird gnomon of the fin, John Williams's simple, haunting score. Whatever horrible thing we're all afraid of: we see its attributes in the world around us and in each other, but we never really see it all the way. "I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by," said the Lord.

Jaws, famously, was nearly impossible to make. Beyond the issues getting the mechanical shark working, filming at sea required a great

3 Quint's monologue about *the Indianapolis* enacts this kind of unseen, impending evil in myriad ways. *The Indianapolis*, a Portland-class heavy cruiser on a secret mission, delivered enriched uranium to the island of Tinian for the bomb the U.S. dropped on Hiroshima. *The Indianapolis* was torpedoed and sunk by the Japanese submarine *I-58*, and only 316 of the nearly 1,200-man crew survived four days of exposure and shark attacks.

deal of creative problem solving. The right depth of water was needed in case equipment sank. Days of shooting were wasted as changing weather and passing ships messed with continuity. In order to make sure no land was visible in the background, the crew had to seize upon fortuitous calms. These problems fall under one elemental umbrella: water. What does it buoy, and what does it sink? What are we able to perceive, and what is elusive, imperceptible, inscrutable to us? In *Moby-Dick*, Melville writes of the problem of conceiving of the full scale of the whale: "The living whale, in his full majesty and significance, is only to be seen at sea in unfathomable waters" (239). So with the shark, and so, I think, with everything.

Ultimately, *Jaws* is about people—their obsessions, fears, moods, blind spots. It is worth noting that *Jaws* spawned numerous sequels, though masterpieces they are not; evil is not eradicated from the world because we blow a single incarnation of it to bits. Evil isn't even the right word. The universe fends for itself, and within it each thing is driven forth by an engine that is strange and incommunicable even to itself. *Jaws* came out in the summer of 1975, and people were afraid to go in the water, but this kind of fear is a kind of respect for the humming mystery of life. I think the word is reverence.

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A VIEW OF IT

Marcel Legros

unlike last time,
there are no leaves on the ground.

no buses

the salt does not come
to melt the snow

in the bodega,
i undress myself on the counter
for a drink and a magazine.

your mother calls on the train ride home.
i lose my coat behind the couch

IT LAYS ITS ARMS

it is quiet in the city
the water
brushes through the walls
of the buildings.

when it found you,
did you hear something?
did you see its read tail
escaping from your body.

you weren't,
so suddenly,
like fallen earth or,
like a killer had broken onto you
in the night.

a child,
summer's bomb.

(i wish you were again,
green,
or being held in a field
for safe keeping.)

5.

it used to take him years
to notice my scars.
on my phone there
is an image of him.
sitting down
crosslegged
by what i imagine
is a fire.

“it is a root,” my father once said.
i believe he was talking about Yuca,
or the heart.

AN EXISTENTIAL THREAT

David Lehman

It used to mean one thing: a Cleveland man
tells his wife he's going to buy a pack
of cigarettes. Then he gets in his car
and drives vaguely south.

The cops draw a blank. The frantic wife
refuses to give up hope and when the cops
strike out she hires a detective agency.

Years go by. She forgets about it,
moves on with her life.

When the husband resurfaces, he is
living in Columbus, and is married
to the same woman, with the same kids,
the same back yard, the same everything.

In bed at night, with his wife asleep beside him,
the husband uses a flashlight to read a thin novel
about a man who leaves his wife
and takes up with the waitress who
took pity on him with an extra slice of pie.

That man was enduring “an existential threat”
though later it got downgraded
to “a midlife crisis”
as a hurricane gets downgraded
to a tropical storm.

That’s what the term used to mean.
Now it means they want to wipe you off the map.

EXCERPTS FROM *WOLF TRACK*: A READING OF JOHN ASHBERRY'S *FLOW CHART*

Lesle Lewis

From Part II

And yet I'm pushed to read and to think whatever the reading makes me think. It's like a job. (Holophane—a lighting product.) I know this isn't the kind of work that saves lives and most everyone wants their lives saved, but there are other good deeds, more along the lines of improving lives, and I'm of two minds about the values of inclusivity. I mean if we try to see, include, talk about everything, deny nothing, we could have wider views to work with, bigger pictures, less narrow-mindedness. We might also make ourselves crazy and I'm a bit on the edge of it now. Yes, and good ideas can crumble and fall and be dismantled. My brain is not pliable enough. I'm not smart enough to handle this. There's some feeling here of obligation, of having to say what you say, that not saying it would be wrong. And it's overcast and warm where I'm writing from, just so you know. The setting and the conditions are important to take note of for reasons I can't explain. The notions of coming back to an idea later or getting ahead of myself suggest there really is an order of some sort and it's comforting to think so in the midst of the maelstrom. The notion of newness is also interesting. And secrets. I could just make a list of things of interest. There are directions here to follow. And I am liking this momentary feeling that I could change something

about myself or my life that would feel substantial and be an improvement, like I could be suddenly smarter just for the wanting it. I could know which things are omens and how to read them. But the section ends on a downbeat, and the sky is seriously overcast and I wonder and worry if the afternoon mood will come again and how when I'm alone the next few days I can distract myself from it and if there isn't sun in town next week how that will feel.

I can't hold that much in my head and certainly I can't say what I hold and I am convinced of the density and unendingness of detail and abstraction and never mind under water and in the night sky. Why would I put anything else in the picture? Why add characters or plot or some other setting when I can't handle what's already here? And things ask to be included all the time. Kissing the king is docking the boat. Taking our time, our time. Is this different than the last part? Am I including myself more, and what's the good in that? It affirms myself to myself maybe. No one one gives me confidence though perhaps I read and read this book to see what's possible, how it can all be put together even with a sacrifice of sanity. (brio -vigor or vivacity of style, adamantine - unbreakable.) I'm exhausted, up to page fifty-nine.

"Sunbeams" is a word I could use and I'm sorry to be so all over the place. I could work harder on gluing pieces together but they don't really want to be stuck together but want to be free to be themselves, to wander off when they're done with whatever came before. What comforts us are shapes because they suggest that one thing starts and ends, has boundaries like the twenty-four hours in a day, or the years in a life span, or the number of days of a vacation. If shapes like these can be

hung on a line and blow in a breeze, their inherent masses still maintain themselves. People shout on the streets. Women give birth to more and more children. What kind of breakdown did you have? You used every part of your brain. There was no room left for complaints.

I'm not sure where I left off. Today is the sad inauguration day and much is happening inside and outside which serves as back drop, but here goes anyway. Nothing to sniff at. It doesn't do to say humans are strange. I'm hostile and it's not funny. We have to grovel, that's the word. And of course march. This is so serious and stupid what's happening. You might suggest we sit back and watch. You might remind us that plants are still growing. You might hope that laws can help us. Here goes a fight that will go on and must. It's not a bad dream unless it all is which certainly could be the case. I wonder how we will do in this. The poem says my "mettle has been tested" if by "you" he means me which he does in part.

Can one be happy enough? Can we just keep adding things? Hours later, years later, this is days, maybe weeks later that I am continuing. The night hides things or rather the light shows things. We keep doing the routines of our lives and we are mostly glad for the routines that keep us from having to think about every little thing we do.

What city is this? I ride through it and know none of its people. If you are reading this, we are a bit in this together, riding the train at night through Bridgeport reading *Flow Chart* forever.

Smell the whiskey. Is there whiskey on this train?

The poem says, "But remember, one isn't obliged to love everything/and everybody, though one ought to try." And he goes on and it's exactly the subject I've been thinking and worrying about. He suggests we might try to give credit to the face presented to us as if it were the real person and not so much the person the person wants to be. What do I have against this kind of pretending? Is it just that I'm so bad at pretending myself? It's okay, maybe it's okay, to have life-long problems to work on. What else do we have to do? And now I'm up to a piece that I know very well: "I'm happy to be back with others."

From Part III

Meslinde?	maybe Meslinde?
Oh	the speaker surprises even himself
I'd	and here he is
come	coming right at us
before	but it was a while ago
to	with purpose
let	to allow

you
in,
and
saw
only
a
chipmunk,
and
so....

But
now
it's
nice
to
sing
along,
and
read
the
newspapers
together,
and
try
on
funny
hats:
only
be
aware
that
at

I like to think this is me
especially if I'm welcome
in addition to
we might be grounded in a view here
but it won't satisfy
and it's singular
small, but not unworthy rodent
which takes us where?
we won't be told, we won't find out,
we won't know
instead, we'll go somewhere new
after what's come before
efficient, this noun and verb together
taking us to a good place
a good place from which to
express ourselves melodically
and with a bigger chorus
but not only
to take in then as well as let out
read what?
ah, the news, sad news
but we're not alone with it
and not only read
but take some action
even if it's a trial
or something lighter
we are allowed lightheartedness
but there's a condition
a condition of being
of paying attention always
to something specific
but not simple

daybreak	so we can limit our attentions to this time of day, the morning after a night of being together
there	yes?
must	I'll obey, just tell me what to do
be	a new day?
no	no, something must not be
trace	not a trail, not a bit, not a shadow
of	of what?
you,	I should leave no part of myself?
or	because if I do
the	something
cock	a rooster
might	but not definitely
not	if I leave a trace of myself, the cock will not what?
crow	oh dear, a cock not crowing!
and	and that's not all
there'd	something else bad to come?
be	if I leave a trace of myself there will be what?
hell	bloody hell
to	I know where this is going
pay.	okay, so I won't
Besides,	and additionally (in parallel)
you	I
wouldn't	yet another unwanted consequence
wish	or theoretical one
it	if we stop here, it's the cock not crowing and hell to pay
even	and it's dependent
if	on
we	us
were	being

together,
as
someday
we
may
be.

which we want to be, don't we?
as perhaps not ourselves
oh, the fantasy
someday we can say "we" and mean it
maybe
be

A
bridge
erects
itself
into
the
sky,
all
trumpets
and
twisted
steel,
but
like

something else now
we are glad to connect with this
an active connector
at least active with and on itself
a kind of self-transformation
a bridge through its reaching becomes
or at least it goes somewhere ambitious
as if we need to be more inclusive!
okay, we can add sound, even music
but there's more
and it won't be simple and straight
a solid bridge then, a real one
if not simple or simply
the simile could complicate or could simplify
(explain)

the
torso
of
a
god,
too
proud
to
see

at least it will be specific
and becoming human
specifically so
yes?
not a human at all
in addition or excessively
clearly not the humble human
but limited in its own way
not omnipotent

itself,
or
lap
up
the
saving
grace
of
small
talk.

And
when
these
immense
structures
go
down,
no
one
hears:
a
puff
of
smoke

is
emitted,
a
flash,
and

or even self-aware
and there's more the god can't do
drink?
consume
what does the god consume?
why we have gods in the first place
but please leave us some of this
whatever it is
be it modest
we can always indulge in this, but it doesn't make
us feel better about the bridge which can't
really help us anyway
there's more
at a specific time
and with something we already know
large
like the bridge?
move
collapse
then
none of us
are we also blind to the structures coming down?
one
slight sound
of something else
not a puff sound then, but smoke, like ash, like
leftover, ruin
what?
let out as evidence
one
quick sighting
then

then
it's
gone,
leaving
behind
a
feeling
that
something
happened
there
once,
like
wind
tearing
at
the
current,
but
no
memory
and
no
crying
either:
it's
just
another
unit
of
space

next
we're still talking or at least thinking of the bridge
coming down
and disappearing
which leaves us with
a remnant
something singular
if amorphous
with a belief attached
connected to
a vague action
where the bridge was
at one time
as if
yes, wind can be destructive
destroying
specifically aimed
the one and only
present or waves
and not only this
we hang
so we don't even remember the bridge?
and not only
another thing we are lacking
sadness
we don't remember so we're not sad
the destruction, the disappearance
no big deal
just one of many
things
or piece of
the wide picture

reduced
to
its
components.

An
empty
salute.

so smaller
becoming
belonging to itself
things break down into their pieces (we should
accept this)
a further explanation perhaps
but not a full one
a thing, but not a thing, an empty thing, an
empty welcome

Surely,
no
one
creeps,
no
one
speaks,
yet
one
can't
call
this
silence,
there
are
too
many
ships
on
the
horizon,

and we like some occasional certainty
even if it's a negative one
not even us
because we stand?
maybe we'll get there by a process of elimination
not even us
almost always better not to
but there will be consequences
not no one
but might as well be
not name, not speak, not say at all
whole thing
our quiet is not a passive one
it's something else
existing
in excess
could be too many anythings
even this
it must be water
a specific ocean perhaps
how we see ships, our perspective

and so that there are too many ships means we might
or must speak?
besides, a fact, even if it's on the side
a just one
pea little pea
blinded can have such power
me it takes nothing to ruin my clear view
the I must go along
last most recent
time how long ago was that?
I thank you for being here
tried and you keep trying, don't you?
to to do many things
look certainly to see
for a kind of search is happening
significance or importance which is only one part of what
we call meaning, intent being another part
in and we look so many places
it, being the pea or the ships or really any of it
and we continue
then time continues
lots and it's full
of of such a variety of possibilities
people certainly other humans
are exist
ready with expectations
to and preparations to act
tell or say to us
you or just me
you've that I have
gone headed in a specific direction
astray, the wrong one

but
what
about
the
rest
of
them:

they
may
not
think
so,

although
they
say
nothing.

yet, perhaps it's not too late
question after question
some of them specific ones
very specific
or maybe it's everything else
are we still with the people?
the ones who don't tell us we've gone astray,
 maybe the ones who are sticking by us
what of them?
what is possible?
or not possible?
what can we rule out?
that we've gone astray (these are the people on
 our side then)
but maybe not completely
what else about them?
what do they tell us about ourselves?
they say nothing, not that we've gone astray, but
 not that we're heading in the right direction
 either(no one ever lets us know)

WHEN I FEEL A WHOOP COMIN' ON

— FOR THE FEAST OF WHITSUNTIDE & AFTERSCHOOL DANCES

Steven Leyva

ain't the butter
fly, it's the tootsee
roll the speakers
pose as a polemic
against your narrow hips

this circle's musk
classmates grinding like
black pepper in a cheap mill—
uneven, coarse. Shamelessly
you practice outside

the arc of polo shirts, crop-
tops and starchy jeans sharp
enough to cut penumbras
from 8th graders. Summon
an adolescent faith to push

past the girl who laid her tongue
in your mouth like a lisp on a field
trip to the zoo right
in front of the rhino

exhibit. Your lonely Afro-
Latino blood bids

the center of hype,
oooooh, and funk to be
filled with your inheritance –
flat feet, a skinny boy's sense
of rhythm, and a soft uptown fade.

Go boy, Go
you've only heard
in church. this dance is
different than the holy
ghost shout filling half

an hour on Sunday
nothing like the body
rock of your father's bachata
he'd pull out to prove men
with flat asses could dance.

Still you press and press
throw your knees like bolos
catch up to the dj's scratch in
time for the song to switch
choruses – Boyz II Men: *don't wait*

til the water runs dry. Those
violins still weep for the awkward
slow drags you'll soon try
but there's a two second panoply
where you've imitated the other

boys in their non-battered fly
in their roll tout-suite. There
at least a hip moment of locomotion
where no one could charge
you with a lack of blackness.

To the left, to the right
more flame than Pentecost,
eyes like two upper rooms
wholly ghosted, your body
becoming a tongue, spoken.

ARROYO

Ananda Lima

They say the first letter
of my name evolved from a picture
of a carcass, uma cabeça de vaca
my neighbor says not to let my son
sleep on our bed with us
but I do, I understand
the terror, at night
I am haunted by the carcasses
of my great great grandparents
dry in the drought cracked soil
of the Northeast in the bones
they inhabit on my bed

In America I learned that arroyos
are paths created by the rain
but I already knew

At night the cracked soil calls for me
the cabeças de vaca of my greats
calling and calling
I tell them *I don't know you*
but I do

When I am out at night
I see a bifurcation
solidified in calcium
I follow the city's spine

they tell me not to
walk in certain of the Oranges
after dark, and I tell them
What am I
supposed to do
float?

In America they eat
the bagasse of oranges
and they say my name
means bliss, I am
in love with bone
white concrete, the spine
of the city sits fleshless
and free of scales
flexible bones that can
bend and keep bending
and keep bending
and bending
bending right up
until they snap

KAMIKAZE

River Lord

I have developed a fear of my
own fingernails I catch a glimpse
of the end every time the paint
chips I am worried it will spread
to my hands and I'll never
use them again in developmental

psychology Rochat's five levels of
self-awareness involve differentiating
me from you like a mental immune
system we wear non-self on the
surface before being swallowed and
digested I fly these red flags

across all of my cells I'd rather
die than let another use my body
selfishly emotion slips into a coat
of illiteracy or was it something more
comfortable we judge a poem by how
tight it can hold on to the snagged

fabric or the pattern it makes of the
scattered paint chips the truth sinks
to the soft floor of the warm belly of the
longest word you can scream without
stopping to take a breath the truth is
there's someone alive in this maze I'm

not obsessed with getting older but
with how time keeps us we mistake
entropy for aging because they're
both inevitable it's an energy thing I
don't see wrinkles I see waves across
my face clamoring for chaos and gray

gray gray I study the biosynthetic
pathway of hCG in endocrinology
and am reminded of the first time my
mother tried to kill me you spray
the hormone beneath your tongue
to trick the body into thinking it's

pregnant you can consume only 500
calories per day and still avoid
fat-saving starvation-mode I was
thirteen years old and learning how to
grow now I'm split in five different
directions there's not enough of me

to go around my frantic grip on
the intangible getting looser
all the time how to recognize
myself in the mirror without this
objectivity impermanence I can't peel
myself from the things I use to

self-define Texas still finds me behind
cupped hands over closed eyes you're
always right where I left you when I peek I
work myself into these lines knowing that

I'll never get out I can see where this
poem ends and begins my mother says

she doesn't know who I am and
I wake up just before the part where
she figures it out this thing has
no *intention* at all it just is boundless
body infinite potential flying by
its own wing or by someone

else's it doesn't really matter
how as long as it's *up there*
kamikaze is often translated as
"divine wind" pushing me back over
rough patches of placenta this poem
will kill me before I can find

the part that made me cry at the
end of my walk home I finger the
white fascia sticky plaque webbed
over holes in my brain I didn't
feel them there until I fell all the
way through being sober means

nothing goes over my head anymore
it sails right through against the
greater odds you have elected
to take me seriously to taste
my elementary and call it style
I'd offer you a stronger hold on

my spinal cord but I forgot to mark
the page our bodies have almost
the same chemical composition
as sea water and unto sea we
shall return by some god-like gust
of air over-active anti-bodies

self-swallowing chipping paint
I bend my fingertips back at the
joint I know where this poem begins
and where I end weaving all these
bones into such a soft body just
to be picked out the feathers

flying up from under us every time
I shift below the weight of a parting
sigh the crunching blow of potential
devolving into kinetic crystallized
against taut canvas working tongue
mourning light the hard shape of a

word.

HOT FRUIT

Erinrose Mager

It took me until after my father's war, which wasn't his war, to know where to go, and by then he had died, and I was all-the-time moving through doors and into gardens to look into the light and then moving through gardens to look toward a road and then walking after nightfall, until daybreak, toward a vanishing point, and so forth. I'm here now.

I run the edge of my little clam shell mirror up a fruit's seam. I lick my hands, the mirror, drag my bottom teeth up the rind.

Sometimes I don't know where the ledge falls off. I sneak the little clam shell mirror around the corners, tilt it down to catch a steep one. Through the mirror: at the bottom of a ravine, a sea of slow-moving nacre or a sweet string of dark houses. A faraway light in a valley, at times, turns on and then off.

Well, I couldn't have known.

He'd been sitting at the table, looking at me. I was a baby.

He said, She never laughs.

My mother said, She's observant.

He said, Me? I laugh all the time.

My mother said, I've never known what about.

He laced up his boots, scattered green peas into the garbage. I'm tricky like that, he said.

The python's integument stretches to accommodate any prey—the skin's cell structures warp, the organs move over, the dead animal slides down and within the length of the snake for storage. It's these facts that I've learned within the course of a life. I must say that I'm unflagging in my interests if these interests allow for solitude.

I'm not hungry right now.

My hands, the mirror, the skin around my mouth are tacky. I nurse the fruits when I discover them along the way. They're hot and bloated from exposure.

I didn't find him slumped, my father—he was hundreds of miles away in a soft chair I'd never seen, and I was mounting a summit or trying to—but I know this much to be true: I'll never close a man's eyelids with my own two fingertips because that is a death ritual, and I have limits. I wouldn't, for instance, paint a portrait and call it the best I've ever done. I wouldn't, for instance, assume I understand the science behind the phenomena that I love.

Here is a furred spot rotten on the path, once a squirrel who'd readied for winter, and I dodge it like a dancer, which is to say that I point my toes and feel a liteness right there in the road. My itinerant thoughts—I encounter them in any stranger who looks like I do.

I unpocket the mirror, feel the ribs of its shell, open it. I could use it for anything. I could angle it toward a heron or a machine that plays music. I guess that's invention. That's the opposite of devotion.

THE TAILOR

Nick Maione

When the last leaves quit the trees
and the air is too cold to go without a jacket
and the glory is by night's edge divided

and the clean moon is blaring
and everyone alive is gone
and everyone dead is a crown

he goes out without any clothes
to stand under the branches
to meet the Tailor

he stands up straight
his chest heaves
he is muzzled for psalms

he is quiet
the inspection begins
it feels blurry

it feels good
he looks down to watch
the work being done

skeleton hands sew patches
of cleaned-of-color light
onto his garment

wherever it is torn
which apparently
is everywhere this year.

ALONG THE CITY'S JAWLINE (1712 NEW YORK SLAVE REVOLT)

David Mills

Along the city's jawline by the wharf
where countless slaves were auctioned
Claus might have heard tell
how Robin sunk a penny-knife

into the palm of his owner's back; might
have been privy to the revolt's before
or after; might have offered Akan
Robin that knife or shelter in the wee

hours of an April morn. Now he finds
himself barefoot, stripped to the waist
spread-eagle, bound to a wagon wheele:
spokes versed in grass and its green

obedience; mud's scorched metamorphosis;
the way snow delivers news piecemeal
from the heavens—a cobble's
infinite calm. Body stretched

slowly rotated on that wheel, Claus
absorbs its stories: the dust, the turns
the deliveries, each journey's arm
and leg, the living in a wagon's

exacting shadow. The executioner seldom traffics in compassion and punishes Claus “bottom up.” First a sledgehammer rains on

his shins
 ("Jesus have mercy," he prays rotates)
 until they snap in two gaps of the wheel;
 a wooden cudgel sings to his kneecaps
 (he yodels rotates)
 til they shatter 'tween wooden spokes
 in the wheel.

(Even the chalky, taunting throng winces) Then
an iron bar's blows administered to his forearms
(he groans rotates)
til they're smashed in some gaps in the wheel....

the elbows/the chest/the endless...bone-cracking caught a quarter mile off. Until, against G-d's own architecture, each limb dips like a fractured black hammock.

On the Commons between Broadway
and Kip, the wheel's nailed high on a pole.
Sparrow-hawks, oblivious and swift, pecking
at the broken body. For four days he's buoyed
bloody laundry only death has the stomach to dry.

DOWN BELOW SAY-SO: PEGGY (ENSLAVED NEW YORKER 18TH CENTURY)

I got dark authority. Some down below
and a bit-of up-above say-so. Shop
and sometimes sign for Master. Mostly

I spice, stir, boil and stew. I rule
as beads gather round my top lip, bend
and sink sweat into my striped apron.

(I roast and bake while roasting
and baking sweetmeat and mutton.
With all these smells (cured fish:

its salty kick) a nose is mostly on
its own down here in this dewy
and dark where water huddles

fearin' 'ticular temperatures only
want it to up and leave. My world
ruled by mean heat and knuckles

of smoke: hours of kindling fire, bake
kettles swayin' from pothooks, grimy
spits turnin', flames flaming, coals

raked. Grunt. Lugging a cast-iron pot
onto a bickerin' pile of 'em, guiding that
wood shovel (handle long as tall John's

arm) to ease some tarts in that
oven's paunch. Everything boils
down to heat. Some of the fire

place bricks: tint of bone.
It's simple. Black bread only rises
to a point, like me, climbing

the mistress' stairs setting
my simm'rin living just two
notions shy of her shut door.

THE LION, THE WITCH & MY BROTHER TIMIKO

Benjamín Naka-Hasebe Kingsley

We're well past your wardrobe
& on hospital steps. You've jumped
from our mother's 40mph minivan
for a third time this month. I beg
& explain a concept high above
the black hair on your head I shaved
it so many times to the bareness: analogy
the Lion is in your heart. & the Witch
doesn't ride backseat in our mother's
Chevy Lumina. Tumbling though across
your face it's obvious you've eaten all
the Turkish delight chased Kool-Aid smile.
They say Down syndrome is
a continuum. but we've ridden all the way
to Narnia for years & arrived right here. Parked
our carriage so far from the beautiful
British schoolchildren on VHS you love
sometimes I wonder if it'd be easier
for me to force a flea market sword
through the white chest of a real ice witch
anything to bring you with us back home.

BLOOD DIARY (GIRL ACROSS THE STREET): MOTH ON FIRE

Rainie Oet

March 15, 1994

The moth on fire in Diane's yard,
across the street,

jerkling to follow
the trail of its own glowing smoke,

can't realize *it is* the light it seeks,
is on fire.

The light of this fire throws wing-shadows
onto the unbraiding smoke.

Enormous, these shadows
pound against time.

I feel self-conscious,
watching.

AT THE WINDOW

Caitlin Roach

where we have sat watching the red throat dip its ringed neck
below the sweet pool's lip, we watch seed fall from beaks as fast
as you are dying. The storm has come and cleared all
of its thirst. The scant tubes' wet glory growing
like the tumors your body's indentured to are sweet
mines the hummingbirds stab. One laps at the feeder.
You cannot count aloud. I watch your index finger tap your lap
for each lick her thin tongue sucks the minty juice from
the basin as it were milk. No, not mint: sweeter than it.
I note each one with a number I whisper loud enough
for you to hear. Each day is like this: nuthatches pock the silver
maple's branches with white breasts, the cardinal's
brown crown raises as she puffs herself out after a bath,
the finch stabs the suet, the robin plucks a worm
from the wet ground, the squirrel bullies each winged thing out
before being chased off by a loud pound another
makes on the window, and you wait for the ruby throat
to visit. Nothing changes but that each day
you die more. We take the lit edges of clouds for a sign
of a miracle: that you will be better: that the cancer will
shake itself loose and the globed fruits growing inside you
will blot themselves out, will be blotted by a figure
you figure lies behind the grey lumps of clouds we cannot hold but
look up at, assign meaning to, are blinded by. No:
they do. I know you are dying and so do not pray for what I know
cannot touch you. Meanwhile my body broadens for the dark
shadow it's making. As it grows, the milky flutes you loved but

forgot the name of grow fat on their ribbons like wet bells.
I show you photographs of them clutched in your hands
from the day you married and still the memory
won't reach but you correct the mistake I make about lace
overlay on your gown. A flash of the mind whole in
a moment like this is miraculous enough. In a moment
the wind will clear the firefly's wing from the table
which the storm tore clean from its body, while back home
the dates sagging in their fiery sacs prove more
than the small rat which feeds on them needs. That
we have all had, in a single moment, abundance
of anything like this. At the window you watch silver nets
in the arborvitae tremble. You tell me a nuthatch
is difficult to understand. You show me slow with your hands how
its body is like this and like this and that is enough for me
to believe it. I tell you again the story of the cardinal who returned
for years each spring to the blue beech, singing
or crying at the same time each night, it was impossible to know
which. You correct me again: robins are the last birds
to sing in a day. They arrive in the evening to have the final song,
sending all others to bed at its end. I have learned well
from you the limits of things, like the music at the pond's edge
a mother summons her furred chicks from, quieted
by the frogs' croaks which cease when they leap toward the water
the moment we pass them: you who have slept here
at this window and well for a long time: who loves the plainness
of robins: whose face I track the twitching of as you dream.
Tonight I will leave you to walk through this wet June's hem
and watch fireflies' cold light flash quick at their ends.
You will sleep through their light all night. Not even the sound
of the tank steering breath through tubes into you

humming will wake you. I take what air there is left, am given, away
from the small red throat grasping the sweetness that waits
for it for the hundredth time today. When your last blink
captures the nuthatch's breast, the long song outside
the window will not know you have gone quiet. The hummingbird
will keep stabbing the sweetness. The squirrel will go on
robbing the seed and the feud of whether to leave him to his feats
will too. When this child asks about god what
will I tell it? It is becoming night. The goldfinch beats its beak
on the window, reddens with the sun, goes mad. There
is nothing remarkable here. The frogs bark. The fireflies go bright
then not. A robin leaks its bald notes.

NOTE:

The fireflies go bright / then not: voice borrowed from Brigit Pegeen Kelly's line
"The canals were silver and then were not" in her poem "The Leaving."

SALUDÉ, MIJA

Dominique Salas

The blinds are shut.
I can decide it is 7 or the
maybe middle of the day,
muddying the sun's eye,
possibly
drizzling out. A gossamer
grid
of concrete hovers over,
lingered
from dreams. It happens:
mute
gasped against and up
a barber shop's wall, urine
puddled
to the white frills of socks,
dad's grip fastened on a
shirt
collar; a mobster's bullet
struck
some brother dead; jerky
canoeing
to a tía through tar lakes,
away from
a mother shouting
coordinates of her
feelings from a vanishing
knoll. There, see

the vomiting way the
laughs noose around
a neck in civil company; a
brown hand docketed
ugly, a sign; it is an air that
reeks a loud stink
from a wet pillow, follows
through showering,
lathering, dressing,
walking in and out of each
day's doors. They are not
mine. No, never that.

SERVUS

P.L. Sanchez

But on Sunday, as you strode through Tengen,
a man approached you and waved. "Sally!", he said,
as if he'd just spotted his childhood sweetheart,
his absent mother, his dying aunt. "That's how they greet
each other in southern Germany", you thought. One day,
everyone in town speaks your language.
When they mention Sally, you demand patience.
They won't see her today.

Can you imagine? To invoke someone else's aunt
in salutation, to renew those vows with a handshake
only to squander them in the back alleys. This time,
they call you by a different name. Then the whistle
wakes you up; it's a year too late
and Sally has moved upstate.

YUNAITEDSTEITS

i.

we found out i had diabetes
when i lost my leg at eleven.
my old lady said shit was about to end
& i didn't believe her at the time.

ii.

i want to head up to miami
but first they stop me down in colombia.
you know ipiales, right?
they search me & strip me down to my bare bones, *papo*.
these boys want to get rough,
but i say no, spare me, give them eighty pesos & they let me go.
it gets real in pasto, though,
'cause these *caballitos* was everywhere.
they was like no, you ain't goin' nowhere, cuba.
they grab my leg & twist it, beat it until it's nothing but metal.
they punch me hard, *mijo*, they kick me
& i bleed from the mouth. i am starving, i say,
even better, they say. please don't take my phone.

iii.

i run in front of an incoming bus. i figure what the hell,
at least it's better here than back there.
a headlights-deer situation. there's no deer
around these parts though. mostly cops.
the driver stops. he comes out & wants to bury me, *chico*.
i tell him where i'm going. he gives me *cinco pesos*

& says don't come back here no more, go back to camagüey, *mijo*,
but in spanish, you know?

CONOR OBERST

Sean Shearer

I ground a worm between my teeth, swallowed its five hearts
in the fourth grade because a
blonde girl
dared me to. I never signed up for Boy Scouts.
There were woods behind my house
scattered with berries I couldn't digest. I'd curl on top
the dirt
hugging the knot inside my belly, and now,
I'm in bed kissing a pale green vein,
as I listen to his voice like a knife pirouetting with its scar. His
god—
six birds stretched into
strings
across a fret board. I fear loneliness but fear crowds more.
Some people say Death is a seashore in Fiji.
I don't want mine to be. Give me a heart
attack
or an undertow. Something with panic and a chauffeur speeding
me to
that theatre.
The place with one velvet seat,
projectors reeling. I could've been a dung
beetle.
I could've been a gut flora or a topiary.
A breeze through a window cooling the fever.
I want to die in
winter

where the whitelight leafs overhead. Below:
eggs of earthworms vibrate, capsuled in freeze.

I take some more, think of the blurred nights
traveling backwards at escape velocity.
I smoke cigarettes and piss outside. My teeth are daffodils.
I cover them with a palm when I smile.

TRANSIT

Aleš Šteger

Tokyo

A wall grows next to another
Like the nights in Shinagawa.

The passage is too narrow
For the fireflies of words.

I got stuck in life,
Therefore I write.

Ljubljana

For twenty years I've watched
Hornets battle
Above an empty trash can.
I live
Under its rusted bottom.

Kyoto

Even without Kyoto,
Without suitcases and longing,
I miss Basho.

Berlin

Needles grow from windowsills.
We're protected from birds.

A cold July wind
Scatters dead souls.

No possibility of rest.
And you, who loves all this.

Chengdu

The buzz of a plane
Crosses a garden
With a thatched cottage.

Tu Fu once
Found refuge here
From war.

Time is a gap-toothed old woman
Silently awaiting him
At the door.

Guadalajara

Dogs sleeping in the sand.
Like silent mariachis
Memories come and go.
I'm staying.

Nicosia

I hear ripe oranges
Falling into mud.
People, cordoned off by the sea,
Braid barbed wire.
The one and only God
Is also singing
Infinite truths for us
In infinite languages.
Five times a day.

Buenos Aires

21st floor.

The city is an old woman
In black velvet.

Letters on a sheet of paper,
Ants covering
Anonymous prey.

Only this is certain:
No one is praying anymore.
No one is breathing anymore.

A siren cuts through the horizon
Like a blind tailor
With rusty scissors.

Eyes closed, I offer thanks.
We are saved
For another day.

Beijing

In Beijing
All poetry is
Misty,
Above and below.
The sun
Mid-day
The dark
Inside me
Are one.

Transit code

Suvarnabhumi,
Shangri-la,
You and your monkey.

Doha, Beijing,
Shanghai,
Again into the foreign world nearby.

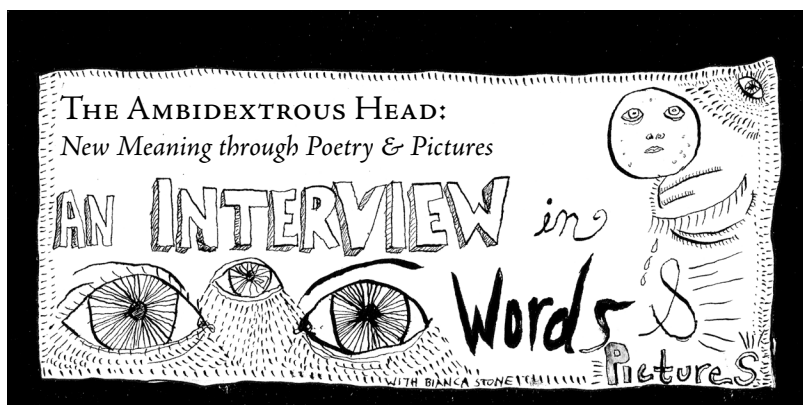
There is one seat, one flight coupon,
Only one suitcase, one bonbon.

Houston, Stansted, Mérida,
Lima, Tivat and Sana'a.

In one head always two,
You and your monkey.

Translated from the Slovenian by Brian Henry

from *Above the Sky Beneath the Earth* (2015)



“Come on in, the ladies are XXX!” beckon the dead of *The Möbius Strip Club of Grief*, the most recent collection by poet and visual artist Bianca Stone. The departed dancers hold the living—“so obliterated, they can barely see”—in a captive lull, “twerking and jiggling” into bleak eternity. The book makes of the reader a client, as in the eponymous poem, wherein we are reminded that the dead are “all out there in the dark, working it. / Pissing in your belly button. Punching you in the jaw. / Forever.” With a consistent voice that charts through every register of mourning, from its intimacies to its obscenities, Stone gives language to unspeakable loss with humor, cunning, pith, and rue.

Bianca Stone has been honing these dynamics over two collections of poetry— *The Möbius Strip Club of Grief* (Tin House, 2018) and *Someone Else’s Wedding Vows* (Tin House/Octopus Books, 2014)—and a host of Poetry Comics, many of which are collected in *Poetry Comics from the Book of Hours* (Pleiades Press, 2016). Much of her work, including a collaboration with the poet and scholar Anne Carson on the latter’s translation of *Antigone*, entitled *Antigonick* (New Directions, 2012), occurs at the intersection of language and visual art. In fall 2018,

jubilat's David Richardson corresponded with Stone via email about images, about text, and about works of words and pictures.

JUBILAT: *What is the relationship between drawing and writing, between image-making and text-making, in your practice? Is the hand that draws the same one that writes? Are the processes always separate? Or do you sometimes write into image and vice versa?*

BIANCA STONE: The relationship is ancient and complex. In our current era, in the structures of higher education, the relationship between text and image hasn't been explored nearly enough, and perhaps is taken for granted, given that it is the first thing we learn (i.e., children's books), and so thought of as juvenile or pedestrian. We get very stuck in our genre, and forget to appreciate what others can offer us, and what we can offer them. It's also such an interesting way to think about meaning in creativity. In the digital age, we're constantly now interacting with words and pictures instantaneously, so I think that's why there's been a resurgence of interest in it.

In practice, I can talk about the process in several ways. There are different muscles in the hand at work, engaging with those two mediums. When drawing I'm using a pen/nib/ink/paintbrush in my right hand. I'm staying steady, trying to make something appear on the page in a shape, into a thing. In writing poetry, most often, it's a movement of the hands on the keyboard: a different dance entirely. More a crouch of the fingers. I love this thinking! Our hands make us human, and here are two very distinctly human acts. For drawing there is so much more emphasis on the right hand. Using the keyboard I can be ambidextrous. I write in my journal a lot and that's where doodles and lettering get a lot of practice, and words and pictures can happen together. Of course I know what you are getting at. The conceit is apt: writing poems and making drawings are two different acts with the same hand. They are

two different things with the same core. To say they are the same would be grossly overlooking the subtleties of expression in art. We can do certain things with each, in different ways, just as with music or dance or photography or essay, etc. For me the separation is cunning and beautiful. But that separation is also what I find electric in bringing them together for Poetry Comics. For me I want the abilities of each form to bleed into one another. I want them to share ranks. But that is a specific genre for me — it is not my poetry, and not my drawings necessarily. It is a third thing.

Elsewhere, you have described the process of combining image and text as “dangerous”: an image can close down a reader’s interaction with the text, and language can close down a viewer’s interpretation of an image. The Poetry Comics are so successful in this way: they multiply meaning instead of reducing it. How do you achieve this dynamic in your work? How do you avoid either medium’s prescriptive power?

Perhaps thinking of Poetry Comics as totally different than a graphic novel helps. Fundamentally, the graphic novel or traditional comic is dealing with prose, and there is a narrative being driven forward. Poetry works very differently than that. Not that they don’t share elements, but this is important to keep in mind.

It’s an intuitive thing in making art, deciding how much to give and hold back from the reader. You need to be more delicate about it than simply saying: ok, I’m going to *illustrate* this text. As a poet, you are aware of one word’s ability to either reduce or enhance the capacity of another word. The same with lines, line breaks, stanza breaks, titles and endings, etc. Everything in the poem, in that small space, affects what is around it. It is the same if you are incorporating images with text. You feel out the power between the image and what text is illuminating it.

I like students to try different combinations and see if their mind changes when you look at them. It is like trying on different outfits almost. For some reason one looks better than another. Why? The subtleties of sound, color, space, meaning, personal flare. Sometimes they are not about logic, but something more mysterious. Often for me it is about the tone of a line of writing and from that place, I create a drawing. Sometimes people see it as “random” or slapdash, but it is far from that. It is more about complicating our perceptions. More about challenging our expectations of meaning. I am not interested only in making it easier for the reader to understand text. I am interested in seeing meaning without control. I mean, we’re sharing this reality and an artist expresses something about that in a way that touches another, hopefully. But I think it does take a certain amount of surrender on the part of the reader, as well as the writer/artist. You have to give up what you think you know about everything and quiet that little monkey part of your brain that’s saying “no, no, no, this doesn’t make sense!” You allow for a certain amount of coldness to take you over, and to experience both image and text without overreacting. Does that make sense? Maybe it’s not *coldness* but an intuitiveness, a spontaneity of blank feeling. I’m getting quite metaphysical, quite into the realm of self-inquiry. But I think that’s what exploring these things inspires.

You have noted that you find yourself turning to drawing when you are “blank and need to stay blank.” Why might drawing better facilitate blankness? Has drawing’s facilitation of blankness been instructive for your writing practice? Are there any forms of language or text practice, like, say, automatic writing, that you think are affordant of blankness?

There’s definitely a certain amount of mental clarity I need when I’m writing poetry, where words come in and out, thoughts are provoked, and chased after, turned around and examined. Writing is an act of language. For that reason it makes a certain demand on the mind that

is exhausting. It's not blank for me exactly. Well, not all the time. When some artists talk about making some of their greatest works, it is not uncommon to say they don't even remember doing it. That it was almost like they were in a trance state (even if it was a nonchalant trance, nothing dramatic). Pure flow in creativity is that rare gift all artists are waiting around for. And that is a kind of blank-out. But no, I'm talking about that I can draw and not demand anything of my mind when I'm doing it. Doodling is a great example of this. I can't write a poem while I'm talking on the phone to someone about my health insurance, but, man, can I draw.

Good example on the automatic writing. A lot of crazy shit can come out from that, and probably a lot usable. Sometimes with my students I have them quickly make captions to a stream of random postcards, and I encourage them to not overthink it, to be as blank as possible. It can help with relaxing that part of your brain that is keeping you stuck in one kind of writing, or overthinking everything, stopping you from taking action. The rawness of your mind is what I hope to tap into with my teaching, and it's perfect for incorporating with drawing because for a lot of people drawing is something they're convinced they can't do. But the liberty of moving your pen around and making shapes and expressing without the confines of language is exhilarating. It can take a blank state to get people out of their own heads, away from that inner critic that's so endless and pervasive. And it's not just about creating art, but even looking at art (like poetry comics); to allow yourself a non judgmental mind in approaching it.

I am curious about that space in the institution where words and images can meet. Was there a teacher or mentor who first articulated that third space for you? Who encouraged works like the Poetry Comics, where words and pictures are used together? Also, are there mentors from your early life that

encouraged this work? I wonder if your grandmother, the poet Ruth Stone, had a visual practice.

My mother, grandmother, and aunt were my first mentors, respectively. They each loved to write and draw. My mom and grandmother both constantly encouraged my drawing and writing, so it felt very nurtured and natural to me. But in college I was taking my poetry more seriously, more intensely, and I had not had the challenge of an institutional setting before that, so for me they remained very separate. It wasn't until graduate school at NYU's MFA program that Anne Carson and Robert Curry expected us to collaborate with one another on projects that went off the page entirely. It allowed me a chance to bring my visual art into the classroom and it was amazing. I freaked over the chance. At that time too Matthew Rohrer was my professor and he was telling me about this term "poetry comics" which was like my two favorite things, what a dream. I did an independent study with him on it, and it became a personal passion of mine.

Could you talk about your work with the Ruth Stone Foundation? I understand that the foundation may facilitate residencies. Will these be primarily for poets and writers? Or will the foundation also seek out visual artists?

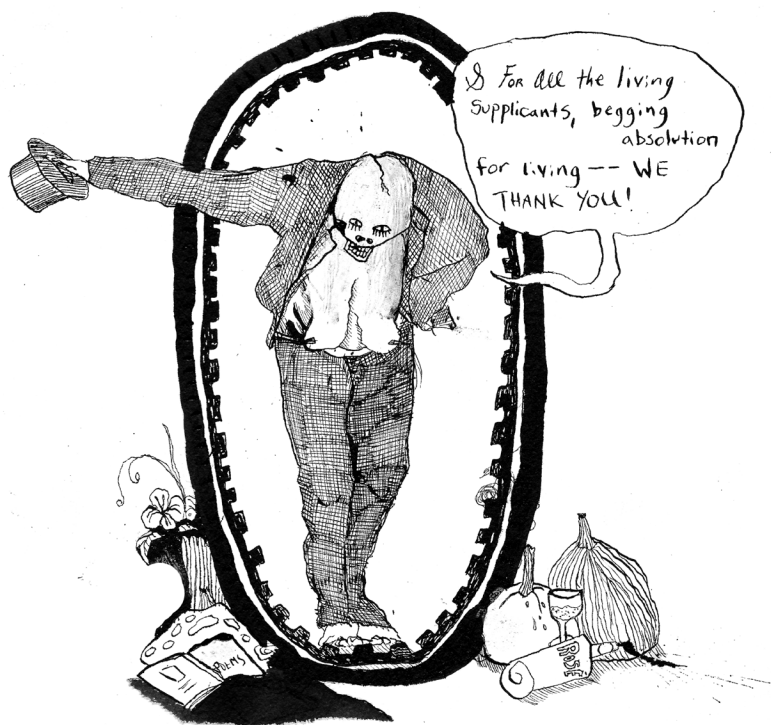
The foundation is based in poetry, and poetry is our groundwork. But we plan to include all genres in various residencies/projects/readings/lectures, etc. This even extends into things like the sciences, humanities, health and environmental awareness, pursuits in spirituality, philosophy; of course music, visual art, and dance. It sounds like a lot, but I'm talking about even one-on-one interactions, a musician coming and working with a poet, or having a small group writing residency that focuses also on health and meditation, panels with local artists and craftsmen, fluidity and conversation between scientists and the arts, things of

that nature. (I wish the Senate had this mentality!) So, the foundation is interested in having different thinkers from society communicate, even if that's on a very small scale. Really it's not about capacity (since the house and property are relatively small, compared to, say, Yaddo) but about the quality of the thinkers and creators we can get there. And poetry is our nucleus.

Though the collection does not include images, vision is a recurring theme of your most recent collection The Möbius Strip Club of Grief, which mourns the death of your grandmother. At the Möbius Strip Club, we watch the dead shake, and maybe pay them for a "Lap Dance." They solicit,

*... You never came much
when I was alive, says one with red hair, lying
on her side, a Botticelli on the stage;
and now you want a piece? \$20 for five minutes;
I'll hold your hand in my own. I'll tell you
you were good to me.*

Is there something about grief that makes one a spectator, perhaps a passive one? In grief, these poems suggest, we become the dead's supplicant.



The book begins with an invocation of Odin plucking “out his eye in exchange for a drink from Mimir’s well of wisdom,” a transaction for which he pays dearly: “the weight of wisdom made his face sour. Seeing everything blown to shit.” He spends the balance of his days drinking at the Möbius Strip Club of Grief. Could you speak to this notion, that grief seems to confer a devastating clarity to the one looking?

As the story goes in Norse myth, after he received the wisdom of the knowing, his “normally cheerful face” turned bitter thereafter, and he’d drink only mead as sustenance. This was because the universe became clear to him, and basically he was traumatized by it and so self-medicated. He is grieving life, which he sees is finite. But also when certain delusions about how our life will stay shatter, it forces a clarity. One eye is shut and another is more open than ever. So it is throughout our lives, and if we are lucky enough to take that bittersweet wisdom and convert it to clarity that isn’t destructive, well, then we’ve lived.



In “Letter to a Letter to the Editors,” this kind of seeing becomes an obligation:

*When one has seen horrors in the midst of everyone’s enjoyment,
to pretend to see reindeer and elves is to ignore a more powerful
perception, covering it with a sheet, as over a wound that will fester.*

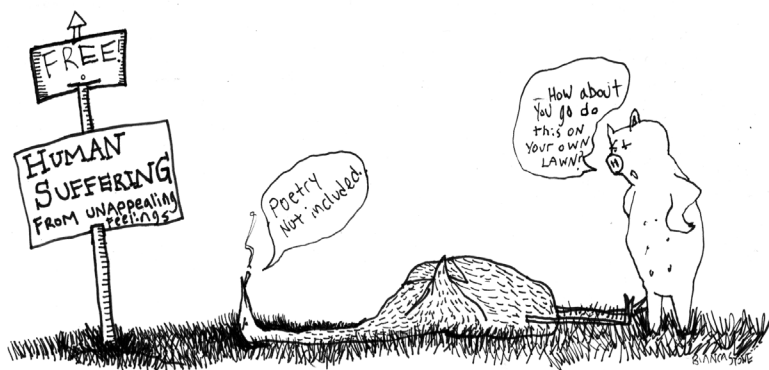
There seems to be both an acknowledgment of the pain of seeing, really seeing, beyond the scrim held up by the “automation of living,” and also an imperative to see, and so to experience this pain. This sense resounds through many of the poems, including the timely and timeless “Ones Who Got Away With It” and, very powerfully, in the final poem of the collection, “The Dark Ages, Revisited,” in which the social reality of women in America exceeds grief, and maybe the poem, and maybe poetry writ large. When we turn to the MSCOG, “The club is closed for the week, ran out of solace.” What, then, to do? The poem commands,

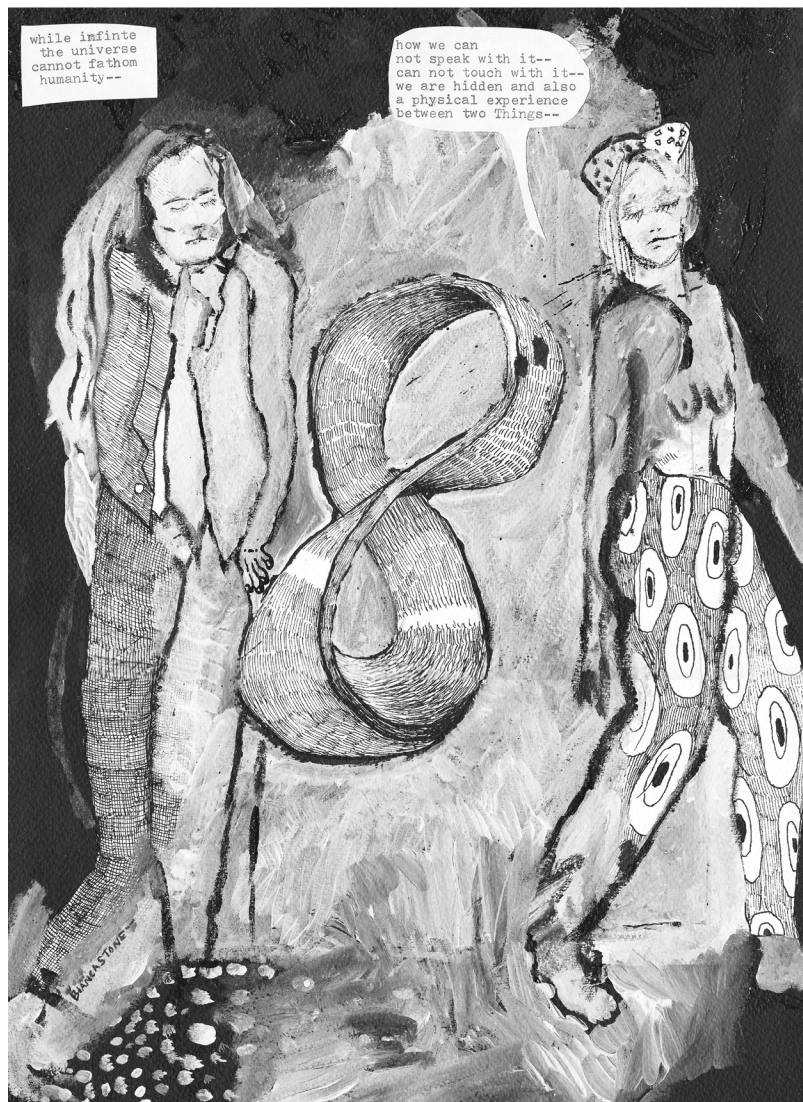
“invent! [...] Invent with your hands! or forever hold your peace!”

Do you feel it is a time of witnessing and inventing?

It is hard not to come naturally to these ideas of witness coming forth. This idea of speaking for who has been unable to speak for so long. Our world now, with its ability to communicate, is in an instance of pain on display, when what grief has been so long embedded in our culture is given language and space to be articulated. Does that make sense? There is a sense of exhibitionism in our social media that is painful on so many levels, but it is also a great catharsis, a great happening of what so long thrived in shadows to be exposed. It’s messy and brutal, but I think there is beauty in it too. The beauty comes a lot from the moment of invention, the moment we are in to finally create and speak and sing how we have not been able to before. So this call to arms of my poem

“invent!” was very much the speaker of the book—the sort of unseen person witnessing everything in the book—breaking through the stasis of grief and bitterness, that has been passed down and carried so long. I don’t want to stay mired in a place of resentment about the “social destiny” of women, when to believe its power is to perpetuate it. I want to make things. I want to see other people make things. I want solutions. I want utopia. And I am so glad that I came to that by the end of the book. I wanted that. I wanted to acknowledge the horror of our country, (I wrote this poem right after the 2016 election) how it is a backwardness, rather than an evolution of our species. But it is up to the creative thinkers to go all-in now and force evolution and some sort of mental enlightenment. I mean, if there’s time before global warming ends us.





while infinite
the universe
cannot fathom
humanity--

how we can
not speak with it--
can not touch with it--
we are hidden and also
a physical experience
between two Things--

ROCKSTONE

Finally, the poem “Because You Love You Come Apart” from your first collection Someone Else’s Wedding Vows later made an appearance in the Poetry Comics. Do you have any plans to use any of the poems from The Möbius Strip Club of Grief in visual works? If not, are there any image-text projects you are currently working on? What’s next?

I’m including this Möbius strip image I did. I have done a few little things visually with this collection, and on one hand it is ripe for imagery. But because of that, I also like to let the reader do the work of imagining. We’ll see. Could be a great play. But for now I want to move on from that world a bit, and look more towards the living world around me. I am concerned a lot with nature at the moment, and that is where my creativity is exploring. My image-text project I’m working on right now is actually animation for a documentary that Nora Jacobson is making about Ruth Stone. We’ve been collaborating on parts of it for years, but I’ve just started doing animation which is so challenging, but I’m having a fun time playing with it. Video and sound add a lot to the process, and give such dimension and depth to a poetry comic, which is what I am really essentially doing, making a poetry comic video. I am also putting everything into the Ruth Stone Foundation, which is also partnering this year with Juniper to offer a full scholarship to a student to take my class Words & Pictures, Images & Text, Poetry & Prose. Mostly my life is balancing raising my daughter, Odette, with my work. It’s fun to figure it all out, if not a bit exhausting.

MOSTLY TRUE BUT THERE IS A LIE IN IT: AN INTERVIEW WITH JULIAN TALAMANTEZ BROLASKI

Julian Talamantez Brolaski is the author of three collections of poetry, lead singer and guitarist for both The Western Skyline and Juan & the Pines, and an editor. Over the course of several months, Julian and John Goodhue corresponded about the origins of its most recent collection, *Of Mongrelitude* (shortlisted for a Lambda Literary Award for Transgender Poetry), and reflected together on philosophies of writing and the interstices between music and poetry.

JUBILAT: *To begin, I'd like to ask you about the title, which I'll add I absolutely love... what does "mongrelitude" intimate, mean? What went into defining it?*

JULIAN TALAMANTEZ BROLASKI: "Mongrelitude" is like the state of being a mongrel, the fact or quality of being mixed-race or mestiz@ (of humans), or mixed-breed (of plants and animals). It's a word I modeled after "Négritude," a concept invented by (the great Martinican poet) Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor, and Léon Damas. "Mongrel" was a word first used of dogs in the mid-15th century and "mongrel" for humans and for plants was a later semantic development, circa mid-16th century, "mixed" even later still (though the etymon "mang" or "mong," whence "among," means "to mix," apparently of drink or food). I thought it was interesting that "mongrel" as a word for a mixed-race person arises exactly contemporaneously with the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, a period characterized by a lot of obsessing over categories and types and rules about what kind of clothes you could wear and who you could be to succeed in the realm, definitely not a

Jew or a "Blackamoor." And this is the age of Shakespeare and what later gets called "The Golden Age of English." I guess more broadly "mongrelitude" could mean any mixed or indeterminate state: mixed-species, mixed-gender, mixed-language, etc. The derogatory nature of "mongrel" as applied to humans, and its subsequent re-appropriation as positive or neutral, bears some relation to words like "faggot," "Indian," the n-word, etc. I only later realized the title makes the acronym OM.

In that same vein, upon first read, the term that stuck with me was neologism. Beyond the title, this book is rife (maybe "ripe" is a better way to put it) with them. As a poet, I love coining new words. I think doing so serves as a reminder that I don't have to be limited by vocabularies familiar to me, let alone ones that exist. Of Mongrelitude feels like it takes this to heart. Sometimes it seems you've created new words entirely. Other times it's as if you've found new words in others or spelled using sets of colloquial phonetics; essentially subverting common vernaculars just slightly in order to birth newer, stranger idiosyncratic ones. Can you speak a bit to this process? What states of being helped or necessitated the conjuring and defining of such a unique, experimental, unexpected set of linguistics?

Poetry is its own peculiar state of consciousness. It's an opening of the mind to exceptional cognitive states, ones that happen inside of language. People "get there" by various means, pills, prayers, booze, meditation, force of will. Or it comes upon you totally unbidden. This conceit of the outward origin of a work of art in Western culture (aka THE MUSE) is very ancient. I've never much ascribed to it, because I think can be a way of declaiming responsibility for the work, which is dangerous. Witness what happened within some veins of conceptual poetry, where you had white poeple non-consensually co-opting the voices of other races. For me, the feeling, the poetic feeling, comes upon me, or emerges in me, but it's not from "somewhere else." It's like what Thomas says about the kingdom of God being inside you and

all around you. You don't need any drugs to get there. It's in language, which is inside and outside of you. Sometimes words arrive and I don't know what they mean. The poem seems to have knowledge that the poet doesn't have. I wrote a poem about that called "this writing feeling":

THIS WRITING FEELING

re 'this writing feeling' I was trying to describe
you were sleepy but yes I saying how the
closest thing I could compare it to is asmr
autonomous sensory meridian response
which for me when I first heard about it seemed to rhyme with
the feeling I get when I encounter great works of art
like those people usually young women in youtube videos crinkling
christmas paper or running their fingers across combs
while whispering in balkan accents
but when writing it's not an auditory pleasure at all in fact
it comes before the pen even hits the page or the finger the keys
it is a feeling xum all over me they the asmr people
insist it's not a sexual feeling but we all know what saying something
isn't is anyway for me it is a pleasurable an erotic a melancholy
feeling moreso
a surplus of feeling that isn't art itself but a visceral indication
that the body
is ready to make art like getting hard or wet 'but it's not sexual'
I am still learning what it means
I only began noticing it a little over a week ago but I suspect it's
always been there
I am familiar with it I definitely already know it but it's getting
stronger now the channel's clearer
transported to the ghost or the guest of my mind

feeling xum over me again
cirxumstance ach feeling xum into me
synapses disarrayed but pleasurably
tearfulness upon me but no tears
as if about to yawn
change of state
deep sigh like how eleonor would say
when preparing to sing imagine you are smelling jasmine
(she said a rose but I thought jasmine)
my dog snu would often yawn
dr. ryan the vet said it wasn't due to tiredness
but to an adjustment a change of state
so, jumping into the car she'd yawn
or waiting for me to prepare her food
so yawning xum and all
the hairs on my arms and legs standing up
the feeling obliges even as I'm describing it
art of the line its nothing doing
the feeling doesnt tell me anything
about how to make the writing it simply
give me the feeling 'I am writing' or
'it's time to write' or what I'm calling 'this writing feeling'
where I know I am receptive to a force
I've never believed in a muse a kind of
conceit of the outward origin
of a work of art
even as I wrote there is never any inside
to differentiate from the out
'I knew things or that is to say I wrote things
without knowing them
when questioned on the very words I'd used
I could not say their meanings
"tansy," for example, or "embrigature"

Totally! I'm really interested in your complication of what I'd consider a fairly common and, arguably, even encouraged mode of creation among poets and artists alike, in the idea of the hazards of declaiming responsibility. Granted, the problems that attend the works of certain conceptual poets are glaring regardless, but a connection between those kinds of transgressions and the idea of the Muse—the way it can be interpreted so as to absolve oneself of authorial incubus—wasn't something I'd much considered until now. In effect, language itself is the Muse, the origin of the poem's curious, origin-less knowledge, and we bear the onus to utilize it responsibly, perhaps?

I guess I should say also that I realized later that that "writing feeling" is also a feeling of being connected to everything, that is to say the earth and the ocean and its creatures, or whatever force or impulse we call the muse or inspiration, the thing that impels us, that breathes into us, or whatever you call god or creator or the great what-have-you. It's that force that is also manifest in a sound, which is a kind of a hum or a vibration which various religious traditions have understood as OM or AUM or Amen.

*A while back I was reading an interview with the late James Wright and a moment stuck with me: he says "the relation between the craft and the mysterious imagination is not what we conventionally think it to be. There are some people who think that a very careful, conscious craftsmanship will repress your feelings. And Roethke understood that it is careful, conscious craft which liberates your feelings and liberates your imagination." Thoughts on this? If you'll humor me here, supposing that such an idea were a barometer of poetic process, where would the composition of *Of Mongrelitude* lie?*

Of Mongrelitude was written by a person exiting a certain way of life, one driven by drink and depression and profound loneliness engendered by (I thought) the titular condition, into the conscious development of life and of writing as a state of consciousness, a state of prayer. When

James Wright says that that thing about conscious craftspersonship repressing your feelings, I think he might be talking about form. I tried out some rigorous forms in my book *Advice for Lovers* (City Lights, 2012). It's filled with sonnets and verses that have particular rhyming or alliterative structures. Form is lovely. It's incredibly liberating and fun. You are moving within these prescribed parameters and that's where you have to move. It's like being tied up and dictating where you want the whips to fall. You're topping from the bottom and the form is holding you. Craft is another thing. That's discipline, rigor, skill. Form can build skill, doing forms is like doing kegels or burpees. But so can any kind of daily writing practice, and total, unambiguous devotion to poetry. There is this kind of frog that has bifocal vision—the top half of its eye is for looking above water, and the lower half is for looking below water. *OM* was written like that, half-drowned, coming out of the water.

At times I find myself lost in the sonic quality of your work, its stark and unusual phonetics. Then, suddenly, I'm ripped out of a rhythm and faced with a stark, often unsettling image or truth. Take, for example, the poem "on loneliness," when you write: "vocal fry making sad heron noises/headed to zorgonia off the x line in queens/profound experience of missing out/gillyham, arden, cokaygne, up to my neck in shit for seven years" These sort of moment are what, to me, confer your work with the likeness of a rollercoaster. Was this sort of destabilization a part of your intent from the beginning? How much credence did you place in sound/nonsense as opposed to truth/sense while composing these poems. Are the sounds and truths in this book even/ever in opposition?

I wrote in my first book *Gowanus Atropolis* 'I knew I had to stop writing nonsense.' But it took me a while. I had to wade through a lot of nonsense, which is never really nonsense, but perhaps indulgently abiding in the pure pleasure of language. Martha Graham said something like if I wanted to explain my work I wouldn't have danced

I would have written an essay. That's how I felt for a long time, not only did I not want my work to explain itself, I didn't want to explain it. Now my poems are semi-fictional. The sounds are truths also. Sound was my pure truth, totally unyoked to any idea that the poem should explain itself or make itself clear. Actually now I'm writing the whole truth like a little Pollyanna. Actually that's not true. I wrote a poem this week that is mostly true but there is a lie in it:

UPON WHOSE HEAD WHAT DIADEM

crushed pine between my fingers and
a redwood is not a pine laurel says
so much for my song 'redwood pines'
i say to ariana
how embarrassing
we were in the pines, i mean
we were in the evergreens
by the secret ruins of lime kilns where
amid the forget-me-nots not yet blooming
and on a chalky colored stone we saw
a salamander with a perfect
purple back and apricot undersides
slinking so elegantly but also slipping
at the same time and we wanted to help it
later on the hill the bees thrum in frantic
tantric circles
a palm frond
mistaken for a feather on laurels back
daffodil essence brightly under our tongue
all the prevarications of weather
promise of rain in the grey clouds
undelivered and the

plum and peachblossoms
that smell like cornmeal and it's only february
the oddments in eddy's cabinet
miniature sculptures of hands
hanging ten or saying i love you
a toreador the size of a thimble
with a persimmon colored cloak
bronze horses with their silver brethren and a ship
atop the heater in two parts it was
a set of bookends but the mind
dissolved the seam

Everything is true but the part about the bees. There is this beehouse on top of a high hill where we were walking. And because it was February there were not many blossoms, only a few straggly yellow ones that used to call 'sourgrass' when I was a kid. You chew on the stems and they are kind of succulent and also sour. But the bees weren't frantic, in fact the bees were quite stagnant, just sort of staying close to the hive and not moving much. But I was thinking about how bees dance and the line 'frantic, tantric circles' came to me. I don't really intend anything in terms of an outcome or an effect on the reader beyond provoking an extra amount of feeling for them. And pleasure. I want my readers to feel something, I want to do something real to them, I want them to know I'm real, to taste my words in their mouth, to meld my mind with theirs across space. It's my way of loving.

This, if I'm interpreting it properly, sort of puts into terms a feeling I've had about writing poems that's been constructing itself slowly over the past few years – essentially to trust in the meaning of your work as manifold and always in correspondence/collaboration with its reader, that it's potentially damaging to you, as well as your work, to try and anchor words exclusively through an intention and purpose that is yours and yours alone. Has your writing always

been informed by a reticence to "intend?" If not, when did such a realization occur? How did it feel?

I would say rather that poetry gives us a flexibility with meaning that we as poets can be freed from intention. If we are attached to a certain outcome in how a reader experiences our poem, we are bound to be disappointed. But I would also say that my poems have moved from being hermetic, self-encased entities that would invite or allow a person in to look at them or interact with them and take whatever away that they wanted from them, to pieces that are saying things in more clear-cut ways. Put in terms of craft, I'm dealing now with the way that the line can potentially transmute itself into a sentence when read out loud, or the way that the sentence can enfold itself into a line, or the way sentence-like thoughts express themselves in lineation, while still retaining their song-like quality. In my earlier poems I conceived of the line in a much more fragmented and abstracted way. The line is still my unit of composition, but it's more invested in making itself understood.

Switching gears a bit, you're a musician. Does that make you a poetmusician (new word?), or a poet and musician? In other words, are these categories one and the same for you, or do they define different worlds, different sets of rules? How does your role as a musician affect your role as a poet, and vice versa. Do you "write" a poem similarly to how you "write" a song?

I think of my poems and my songs as on a spectrum. The songs are only a bit more limited in being yoked to melody. I mean that words like "prevarications" in the poem I sent you might not be so easy to work out melodically in terms of what singing people call "diction" (it's interesting, in the discipline of literature the word 'diction' means word choice, and in music "diction" means how you pronounce things, how a word is paced across the breath, what schoolteachers called "elocution"). But still, some of my poems are metered and rhymed and

3:15 / *sheep affected by wool*
bell and anakin look deep in the old things and the wicks like to know what kind of lives spans that
the winged crows
blue was in their wings
 underneath the juniper tree I set me down to sing
 as the decds were floating by the crows went on their way
 I saw the flies I ^{with} saw the ants
 I put my feet in sand
 I sang them all the songs I knew to give the desert hand
blue was in their wings
blue was in their wings
blue was in their black and shiny wings
 down in the arroyo where water once did flow
 we found piñon and mullein and a berry we didn't know
 bett and aniana gazed up in the sky
 and said we'd like to know the stars that gleam there by and by
blue was in their wings
blue was in their wings
blue was in their black and shiny wings
 I'd like to go up yonder where the ~~sun~~ ^{stars} meets the sun
 + there I'd climb and yander until the day is done
 and when the crows talk to themselves
 I'd talk to myself too
 and when they gild the tilting air I'd open my ^{wings of blue} ~~mouth~~
blue was in my wings
blue was in my wings
blue was in my black and shiny wings
 and in them we found every little thing.

lend themselves more toward music. And I've set some of my poems to music. And some of my melodies that started out as sounds became poems. But some of my more prosaic work wouldn't transliterate so obviously, unless into a kind of sprechstimme which is not really my thing or not yet anyway.

Are above questions even constructive? Are they attempting to define a separation—between poetry and music—which isn't actually there?

It's there and isn't there. Poetry and music in many traditions are inseparable. I like experimenting with the ways they do and don't overlap. Most of my poetry readings involve singing in some way. I think the best way to experience my work would be to hear me reading or singing it and also be able to see the text or the handwritten version projected on a screen.

Anything in the works, poetry, music, or otherwise?

I've been a nomad living on the road for this past year, so haven't been playing in a band. But I just recorded an EP with my longtime collaborator Andy Waegel, who was the pedal steel player in my band the Western Skyline. We're going to release that soon. And I've also been learning some songs in Apache, along with helping my grandmother write a book on the Mescalero girl's initiation ceremony. So I've been singing a lot on the hand drum. And singing and writing new songs on the guitar. I'm working on a book called *Horse Vision*, which began as a book about actual vision in animals, but is starting to be more about spiritual vision and visionary experience.

DEAR BIRDS

Laura Theobald

Dear Birds,

In the moment when I hand
over my cup time seems to
slow. I have no idea how planes
work. Geometry happens from
very high up. The woman next
to me says "Do you know why
you can't run or scream in a
dream?" She says something
about neurons. I don't say
anything. Nor do I look the
flight attendant in the eye. She
looks like a writer, the wife, she
looks like me. The man behind
me laughs whenever lightening
jumps between the clouds.

Birds:

Me:

Birds:

Me:

Birds:

Dear Birds,

I'm embarrassed at Christmas
and on birthdays and other
holidays. I have so many
questions forever in retrospect.
It's hard to say anything. Love
is a kind of weakness. "The
television is so big." I say this
as a point of reference but it
swallows the room. Do they buy
each other gifts? For once, no.

Dear Birds,

On highway 49 we're supremely
alone. The universe has gone
low res. The highway pixels up
to forty feet. You smear the
heavens across the dash. The
street so black it's black. Any
kind of smell seems ominous.
This town mainly moth balls,
Freon, gasoline, and cedar. You
say, "Watch out for animals."
You say, "Don't text and drive."
And then I can't say what you
say next 'cause it's just for us.

Dear Birds,

“No one will ever
love you,” one planet
says. “Space is
wasted on you,” and
so on. This is how
the planets talk. I
try not to listen.
They’re discussing
my frailty now.

WHATEVER I HAVE DONE THAT WAS GOOD, I HAVE DONE AT THE BIDDING OF MY VOICES

Jack Underwood

Twice in the night I woke and warned
the ghosts, *your surveillance had better be kind.*

But they know my uglies,
my egg-whites, how I glow in autumn,
comparatively, as the world dies about me;
how I tend to my five ongoing feuds
like candles in a church;
how I enter each room in my mind
like a soprano.

But once they reach past all this
shame is not the word, this
cold spaghetti, they'll find me at the table,
forks downturned, boiling a rock inside
to keep me safe like anyone,
so I have to admit I'm grateful
for the ghosts' surveillance. I want to be
good, always risking connection, love
and fauna, and believe in keeping still,
and grace, freshwater.

Twice in the night I woke
and thanked them.

PERSONAL POEM

Emma Winsor Wood

I want to write a series of poems called “political poem.” On the surface,
the poems would have nothing to do with politics.
It’s an impossible undertaking.
For instance, just yesterday, running, I saw a hawk hover for an instant before
plunging into the highway ice plant that lines the space between
pavement and cliffs. It flew away, a rat
in its talons. For instance, I’d always thought the ice plant—a “creeping,
mat-forming
succulent” that blooms into a profusion of narrow, colorful petals—was
native
decoration. Now I know it’s a South African plant, introduced to stabilize
the state’s eroding
road banks, but smothered the indigenous coastal plants, which once held
song birds—yes, song birds!—in the process.
For instance, I read on a nature blog that the ice plant produces a fruit, the
sour fig;
it can be consumed raw, dried, cooked, pickled, or preserved.
But, the blogger says, she has never eaten the fruit of the ice plant and does
not plan on giving it to [her] kids so eat it at your own risk.
Driving home after my run, the road beneath nearly invisible beneath
the fog, a person in a white truck (I assumed young, male, white) was riding
my tail, the glare of his headlights making it even harder to see.

FAKE NEWS

TV SHOW CONTESTANTS SPEND YEAR IN WILDERNESS—
WITH NO ONE WATCHING, the headline reads.

Elsewhere, I read about a San Francisco-based start-up that's trying to bring three species back from extinction.

In Stockholm, most of the churches are situated in the center of a large square of grass, dissected by a series of diagonal paths.

The first time we walked through one, I thought it was a garden. Then I realized it was a cemetery.

A garden is 1) a plot of land used for growing flowers or fruit or vegetables, or 2) ground set aside for public recreation.

A cemetery is a plot of land set aside for the burial of human bodies and their remains.

There are often flowers in a cemetery, but they have usually been grown elsewhere.

Flowers get taken to cemeteries for the same reason people get taken to hospitals—to die.

One conservationist said of deextinction, It would be one step forward, and three to eight steps back.

I take four steps back (to get a picture of the church) and trip on a footstone.

In England, footstones were used to indicate the deceased was a murderer.

In the US, they are used to indicate that the deceased served in the Armed Forces.

At one English church I read about, the preponderance of footstones indicates many murderers must have been buried there—

however, their identities remain

unknown because soldiers used the cemetery records as kindling during World War II.

In the US, many laid-off blue-collar workers, mostly men, are looking
for the jobs they used to have, even though those jobs have left
the country for good.

One economist calls this “retrospective wait unemployment.”

The TV network that kept filming the contestants even after the show

had been cancelled reasoned it might still be watched,
retrospectively. They are simply waiting for the right time to air it.

The air has turned all the grave angels the color of frozen grass.

By now, my fingers have lost all feeling. I reach through the neckline of
my sweater and press them into the slightly sticky space under my arms.

No one's watching.

Soon we'll be home. In the wilderness.

today— cannot
be seen, cannot
 be touched.

What is it earthed in me that you desire?
Or, once did—

Your hands have found a boy in the city.

I find your body,
you said. Those words were like skin.

HARBORFRONT HOUSE

Jessica Yuan

It gets so large outside, broad and impossible to close one watershed to another. I am still cranking out the casement, drawing the curtains until even the gelato-eaters on catwalk cafes can see the luminous outline of my family behind reflective film. In the future I wave hello, swallow my jealousy. Because the future is only one small memory foam mattress floating in the airless night sky, sparkling with rougher, shinier places to lay. The possibilities, better and awful ones, mirror back on our curtain wall border, its glimmer manufactured over a hot metal bath like expectation floats burning on a do-what-you-want world. And when I lean out the window, see the cars and cruise ships and airplanes and children all lining up to dock, I am afraid there is no other safe haven from the storm. We are still waiting, the anxious ones with their speed boats, the realtors with their sweaty shoulders touching. We are lucky to be able to look down even six feet before the horizon bowls over, to shout over the hats of victory day crowds standing below us above the ocean. That is the guilt in our survival. That is why even the most how-has-it-come-to-this world has someone like me in the lobby, still able to speak of the future.

Appearances of Eternal Presence



"But I had the right to the cry without translation"
—David Shapiro

If Ararat were three mountains, then I would be three sisters. Each playing the oud, but in different keys and in different cities. There is a fountain in my expression to you. It's a dream made up of squiggly forms. An alphabet all on its own and next to no seas. This landlocked country next to wavy and straight lines. In second grade, I taught my class the letters. The teacher said, "Why don't you begin with the one that looks like a 5?" A purple oud is nevertheless really purple.

I can translate this page, but it will cost you a couple of pennies and a flower.

Let's glimpse into the living room where small, hot coffee is served. And where people can answer questions about eating watermelon with feta and freshly baked barbari bread.

When I say *garmeer*, I mean red.

Suddenly, I'm walking in Gyumri thinking about lavashak. Sour lavashak. And where can I find it at this hour.

I meet a man who sells raisins. It's pouring even though it's snowing.

We look for shelter, but the train brings us to Yerevan, which is also fine.

Words on a page are objects floating in space. We're sitting next to a pond in a landscape that is imagined.

Like an eggshell sky when the sky is not real.

Someone placed a fountain in our path, which is refreshing. I eat lavashak and wish for tea. I drink tea and comb my hair with my hands.

—ALINA GREGORIAN

This dialogue on an imaginary Armenian text was inspired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art's "Armenia!" exhibition.

CONTRIBUTORS

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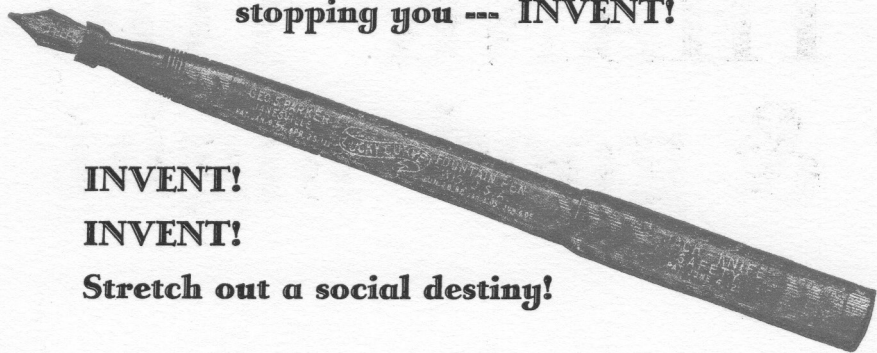
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